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Sean Sloan
Southeastern University - Lakeland, swsloan@seu.edu

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CHRIST AS DIALOGUE WITH CULTURE:

REIMAGING THE CHURCH FOR INCARNATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP AND MINISTRY

A PROJECT DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

IN THE BARNETT COLLEGE OF MINISTRY AND THEOLOGY

AT SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

SEAN SLOAN

FALL 2023

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE SIGNATURE PAGE

This dissertation, written by

Sean Sloan

under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Committee and approved by all members of the Committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the Barnett College of Ministry and Theology of Southeastern University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry.

Date

9 November 2023

Signature — Mark Langner, DMin.
Chair, First Reader

Signature — Richard Butman, Ph.D., Psy.D.
Content Specialist, Second Reader

Signature — Alan Ehler, DMin.
DMin Dir., Third Reader

Signature — Jeremy Sims, DMin.
Dir., Doctor of Ministry Program

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ABSTRACT

God spoke, and *Logos* created. Increased polarization and divisiveness in USAmerican society and the resulting social pain and even violence inspired this project to pursue a healthier and restorative dialogue. If God's spoken and incarnate Word originated human life and was and is the means of redeeming humans to life with God and one another, how might such a dialogical Christology impact a theology of dialogue capable of addressing brokenness in a culture? As action research, this project tested the potential for a theology of dialogue to impact perceptions as a precursor to altering behaviors through a presentation at Calvary Church in Naperville, Illinois, a culturally diverse and multi-national congregation. Identifying both the theological roots of divisive issues and what it means for the Church to be the dialogical Body of the dialogical Christ are steps this project took toward healing racial, ideological, and political division. The broader aspiration was to develop a theology of dialogue capable of bringing health to broken cultural dialogue through a reimaging of Christ for incarnational discipleship in the ecumenical Church. This dissertation presents the research project's biblical, theological, and literary study; applied intervention; quantitative study of the intervention's post-survey; and evaluation and conclusions. The discoveries and implications for the ecumenical Church and cultural dialogue are decisive as the study showed the theology of dialogue did impact the participants' perceptions. The combined findings of the literature review and quantitative study offer potential for broader application in religious and non-religious contexts to move USAmerican dialogue from devastation to restoration. Christ is God's dialogue with humanity as the Divine *Logos* and in-flesh Word through whom God speaks, hears, touches, and is touched. He is a bi-directional "through-word." God's dialogue, in-through-as Christ, continues in and through the dialogical Church as the present, embodied Christ in the culture.

Dedication

To my Heavenly Father, from whom and for whom are all created things, with deepest gratitude for your loving Word who spoke my life and gives his life in the most real and personal dialogue. My speaking is possible by your Word. My creating is bound within your boundless creativity. What life I live because you live in me! My life is yours.

To my wife, Michelle, through whom God's great riches and favor are poured out in the most amazing relationship I could ever imagine. This project is only possible because of your support and sacrifice. You are the image of unsurpassed beauty, worth, character, wisdom, compassion, strength, and nobility. It is through you that I know God's intimate, all-encompassing love for his bride. What love I have because you love me! My heart is yours.

To my earthly father, Dr. J.W. Sloan, for your passion for God, truth, justice, and mercy. I am forever indebted for the paths you cleared, wells you dug, losses you endured, and chains you broke so your sons could know the God you knew and opportunities you did not know. You showed me the Father. I walk the unknown roads in your footsteps.

To my mother, Dr. Dianne Sloan, for your humor, courage, wonder, and spirit that pieced the puzzles and puzzled the pieces. You raised sons in the Son's rising light; and sang his song day and night. You taught me to search for the "really real" for myself. I paint this hope for a world divided from a palette you provided.

To my sons and daughter-in-law, may you live more fully, love more deeply, delight more richly, know more truly, and walk more closely with the God who, although it is impossible for me to imagine, truly loves you more than I ever could.

To my brothers and sisters in Christ, past, present, and future, may we truly be Christ's Body and the image of the Father in this world and may our unity and dialogue be the witness of his love to all whom he has spoken and is speaking to life for their benefit, and ours, and his glory.

To Calvary Church, with gratitude to God for the many seasons of ministry and amazing people establishing a culture that inspires, fosters, facilitates, and releases the ministry of God's healing Word throughout the world, with expectation for what God is doing in and through you and will do through this project in which I am honored to participate in this season. Together, may we know, share, and be the Word of Life to the culture (Deut 30:14, Rom 10:8).

Acknowledgments

Thank you, Southeastern University, for providing such a stellar, inspiring, and enriching environment for spiritual, theological, academic, and relational growth and for facilitating and shaping this Christ-centered, Spirit-empowered, ecumenical project for the Body of Christ.

Thank you, Dr. Mark Langner. I am blessed beyond words by God's sovereign design in your supervision of this project. You are more than a mentor. You are a true friend. I pray the investment of your time, attention, expertise, and heart into myself and this project brings a return for the kingdom of God both now and in eternity and in your life and ministry.

Thank you, Dr. Richard Butman, Dr. Alan Ehler, and Dr. Thomas Gollery, for the many hours of conversation, reading, guidance, and encouragement. You are present in these pages and treasured in my life.

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Thank you, Calvary pastors, staff, leaders, and members, for the honor of working with you to see this project develop and for the conversations keeping this work grounded in practical ministry.

A special thank you to my Lead Pastor, Marty Sloan, for always seeing, believing, and bringing out the best in others. You are a leader worth following, a pastor worth serving, a genuine Christ-follower worth emulating and a true brother in life and ministry. This project exists because of your support and encouragement.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROJECT INTRODUCED

Theological Introduction to Dialogue

God speaks.[1] Genesis 1 and John 1 present the universe and all that exists as coming into being through God's Word, from his being, and from his being "in" his Word. The Word in and from God's being fits the trinitarian understanding of God's being as relational and, within that relationality, his speaking as accompanied with listening to become dialogue.[2] The first dialogue, within the pre-existent Godself, created human life, and God spoke blessing, purpose, and provision to humans in their first conversation (Gen 1:26-30). God's same creative *Logos* is incarnated in Christ, and Christ is incarnated in the Church, his body (John 1, 17:23, Rom 12:4,5).[3] This dialogical ecclesiology and Christology of God's Word-Made-Flesh gives a word (in Christ and in the Church) that is not only heard but also hearing. Only a hearing God can

[1] Theological presuppositions are discussed in the Scope and Limitations section of this chapter.

[2] The economy of the triune God, or perichoresis of the Father; Son; and Spirit, fully incorporates—but is not reduced to—its dialogical aspects.

[3] *Logos* is more fully defined in the biblical and theological study of chapter 2.

answer and truly be God.[4] It is sin that turned away God's hearing (Isa 59:1-2); brokenness in humanity is the result of broken communication (communion) with God and one another.[5]

Breakdown in cultural dialogue is rooted in broken communion with God. Restoring that fellowship begins with restoration of dialogue. God restores and heals by re-establishing dialogue and relationship (bi-directional) through Christ, who was not only spoken as a "seen and heard" human being but also a "seeing and hearing" human and God's incarnate *Logos*. If Christ is God's initial dialogue, then the Church exists as continuation of that two-directional, healing dialogue begun in Christ. If dialogical (bi-directional) engagement with God is the source of healing, health, and wholeness, then the absence of the Church from the cultural dialogue abandons it to broken communion with God and one another. The Church's dialogue with culture flows both out of its incarnational essence as being from God's dialogue in-through-as Jesus Christ and out of its participation in the *missio Dei* for the culture. It is within this mission that the Church incarnates Christ who incarnated the Church as his body in the world. This theological flow—a "dialogical" God in and through a "dialogical" Christ in and through a "dialogical" Church in dialogue with the culture—is the primary catalyst of this project.

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[4] In 1 Kgs 18, Elijah offers the prophets of Baal a test for determining the One True God from a false god. God's reality is demonstrated in the ability to hear the prayer and answer. The false god's prophets are mocked because their god cannot hear and therefore cannot answer. Elijah's taunts of the false prophets include suggesting reasons their god does not hear.

[5] It can be noted here that broken communion with God and with others is not only the result of sin but also a viable definition of sin as sin is separation as much as it is that which separates. Additional scholarly exposition can be found for the related topic of sin as punishment for sin. (See chapter 2 footnote 34) This work is insufficient to attempt development of these and other theological concepts but does acknowledge their correlation to the focal concepts.

Rationale for the Project – A "Primed Primer"

Pain has a beneficial purpose in drawing attention to underlying issues. In part, this study was prompted by the pain of vitriol in current USAmerican[6] cultural dialogue. In part, it was prompted by an assumption about church engagement that was confirmed in the findings of an initial Calvary Church survey[7] identifying a problem in the lack of theological understanding of current cultural issues as well as lack of open, respectful, and exploratory dialogue between people of differing views. Presenting the unhealthy condition of USAmerican dialogue and the deficiency of a church's dialogue with the culture is not intended to amplify, decry, or otherwise make a focus of illness. It is presented as evidence that genuine opportunity and need exist for interventions that Christ, through the Church, can provide. When members of USAmerican society representing various groups and perspectives agree that the culture's dialogue is not healthy, a desire is established for a healthier dialogue. Such a desire provides opportunity for ministry interventions such as the one this work takes a first step in providing.

Richard Mouw, writing theologically, deemed USAmerican social interactions primed for a second edition of his book on civility. He described conditions just prior to 2010, saying, "As I write this, the commentators are depicting the current mood in Washington, D.C., in dismal terms."[8] Need apparently existed prior to the first edition of 1992, and the second edition demonstrated that conditions had, in his view, deteriorated. *Time* magazine, which offers an

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[6] "USAmerican" is an emergent cultural adjective distinguishing something specific to the United States from other American cultures such as "North American," "Latin American," etc. "USAmerican" is selected to modify "culture" or "dialogue" over the longer and more geographical "in the United States of America."

[7] Sean Sloan, "A Survey of Calvary Church Theological and Cultural Engagement" (DMIN 7013 Theory and Practice of Ministry Research Paper, Southeastern University, Fall 2021), 24.

[8] Richard J. Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2010), 8.

USAmerican social lens to world news, posted in January of 2021 that "there is no advanced industrial democracy in the world more politically divided, or politically dysfunctional, than the United States today."[9] Even before the 2020 election and ensuing January 6th riot at the U.S. Capitol, an economics-focused source, *Forbes*, felt compelled to address the caustic nature of cultural USAmerican dialogue due to "a growing number of journalists saying they plan to call it quits from Twitter as toxicity rises to a level even they can no longer stand amid everything from hurtful taunts about their children to outright threats of violence."[10] Two months after the publication of the *Forbes* article, a popular psychological science journal noted that "sitting down for Thanksgiving dinner with family has never been more uncomfortable" and asked, "What has happened to America? And how can we reverse the trend?"[11] In November of 2020, Pew Research recognized "the harsh rhetoric that characterizes our political debates" and concluded, "Americans have rarely been as polarized as they are today."[12] A previous look at USAmerican public dialogue is seen in Pew's review of the 2016 election, which found that "both political parties receive their lowest grades ever for their conduct during the campaign."[13] Social media and computer technology, for all of their beneficial potential and application, so far

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[9] Ian Bremmer, "The U.S. Capitol Riot Was Years in the Making. Here's Why America Is So Divided," *Time*, January 16, 2021, https://time.com/5929978/the-u-s-capitol-riot-was-years-in-the-making-heres-why-america-is-so-divided.

[10] Kalev Leetaru, "Is Social Media Becoming Too Toxic?," *Forbes*, July 19, 2018, https://www.forbes.com/sites/kalevleetaru/2018/07/19/is-social-media-becoming-too-toxic/?sh=5a1f3cb54f0c.

[11] Joseph M. Pierre, "Why Has America Become So Divided?," *Psychology Today* (blog), September 5, 2018, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psych-unseen/201809/why-has-america-become-so-divided.

[12] Michael Dimock and Richard Wike, "America is Exceptional in the Nature of its Political Divide," Pew Research Center, November 13, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/13/america-is-exceptional-in-the-nature-of-its-political-divide/.

[13] "Voters Evaluations of the Campaign," Pew Research Center, November 21, 2016, https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2016/11/21/voters-evaluations-of-the-campaign/.

have appeared to exacerbate toxicity. Jeff Myers quoted 2013 research that found angry tweets to be the most retweeted.[14] He concluded, "The internet makes us madder and meaner."[15] Myers' work also quotes the president of the National Association of Scholars, who described American anger as "more flamboyant, more self-righteous, and more theatrical than anger at other times in our history."[16] Myers' research recognizes the relational damage of modern digital dialogue, which "makes us feel that it is okay to treat others rudely or even shut them out completely."[17] When theologians, social news media, economic publications, science publications, and culture-focused research all have published content on toxicity and disruption in family and social relationships evidenced in a society's rhetoric, it is reasonable to conclude that that society is primed for healthy intervention in its dialogue. What form might that intervention take?

Where international conflict has agitated to the point of war (extreme dysfunction), the path toward peace (health) involves "peace talks." To the degree that motives or methods remain unhealthy, the potential for a beneficial outcome of the intervention is reduced or eliminated. Truly peaceful and peace-seeking "peace talks" function both as the intervention itself as well as the outcome of successful intervention. So, too, the opportunity for intervention evident in current USAmerican dialogue demonstrates the potential for healthy dialogue to be both the lacking element and the intervention to remedy that deficiency. This example is a socio-political expression of the same reality demonstrated in God's intervention through Christ. Dialogue

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[14] Jeff Myers, *Understanding the Culture: A Survey of Social Engagement* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2017), 181.

[15] Myers, *Understanding the Culture,* 181.

[16] Myers, *Understanding the Culture,* 181.

[17] Myers, *Understanding the Culture,* 149.

addresses division in both human relations and in God's relations with humans. Brokenness in dialogue requires a new form of dialogue, and a new dialogue in form, particularly the form of Christ as God's dialogue whether embodied in Jesus or his Church.

Certainly, social battlefield issues themselves, such as race, money, power, identity, and welfare, can be explored in the effort to advance the health of cultural dialogue. This Doctor of Ministry project, however, looks beyond symptoms to establish from the rationale above either the existence or absence of a foundational theology of intentional cultural dialogue and engagement, which might illuminate understanding of both the divisive issues and potential intervention(s). In other words, it explores the divide underneath divisive issues.

George Eldon Ladd says, "The Gospel must not only offer a personal salvation in the future life…it must also transform all of the relationships of life here and now."[18] In Ladd's statement, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, salvation, cultural relationships, and earthly mission are all present and connected. Some significant theological convergences and implications for a theology of dialogue include Christology, ecclesiology, missiology, and pneumatology, among others. Although it is impossible to fully examine each of these connections, neither can they be fully avoided. The biblical and theological aspects of dialogue remain the focus to establish a foundational theology of dialogue upon which to build interventions for Christ-followers to lead modern culture from chaos to life.

The research project this dissertation presents addresses Calvary Church's role in current USAmerican culture, a culture characterized by polarization and a breakdown of social dialogue.

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[18] George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman's, 1990), 16.

This project dissertation collects, restates, builds upon, and publishes research of the last two years in the Doctor of Ministry Program at Southeastern University, including unpublished works submitted in the following courses: Theory and Practice of Ministry; Spirit-Empowered Leadership; Scripture, Theology and Practice; Contextual Engagement I and II; Communication of the Leader; The Leader and Organizational Health; and Culture, Context, and Mission. This project dissertation presents evidence that the Church, engaged in dialogue with the culture, is God's answer to a culture primed for healing.[19] The work presents and supports a potential theology of dialogue that sees the Church as God's incarnate "through-Word" and Spirit-filled-Christ-embodied[20] and commissioned to be present in cultural dialogue as God's answer, rather than just to have the answers. The research project presented and evaluated in this dissertation seeks to advance discipleship of one local church in fulfilling the Christian mission of "reimaging" the *Logos* of God in cultural dialogue.[21]

Relationship to Ministry Context

Calvary is a generationally, racially, economically, educationally, and politically diverse church situated on the border of Naperville and Aurora in Illinois; this area is part of America's third largest metropolitan area, known as Chicagoland. Calvary is an international church with over

[19] See Matt 5:13-16 (salt and light), also Phil 1:21-26 (to live is Christ and benefits others).

[20] Chapter Two addresses potential confusion with modalism and new spirituality perspectives by establishing that the nature of the Trinity, which neither sacrifices distinction nor unity, is the model for understanding the Church in Christ and Christ in the Church without confusing the Church with Christ nor sacrificing the Church's oneness and mutual indwelling with Father and Son presented in John 17.

[21] Reimaging refers to a return or renewing of the church's true, incarnational nature as bearers of the *Imago Dei*—the image it is created "in" by God's original act through the *Logos*.

sixty-three nations represented. Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Filipino, Yoruba, and several Spanish dialects are among the many languages that can be heard in the church's corridors. Twenty percent of Calvary's weekly attenders are in the Calvary Español service. Five percent attend the Calvary Indian service (conducted in English due to the variety of languages in India). Diversity at Calvary is celebrated and transcended. Christian identity and unity in Christ are central to the message and mission as the *imago Dei* is valued in every human expression so that diversity does not sacrifice unity nor unity diminish divine diversity. The first two members of the church, who are now in their eighties, remain in the church along with many other tenured members of twenty, thirty, and even forty years or more. At the same time, more than half of the church has been attending for less than five years. Such generational and experiential diversity factors into the church's culture.

Calvary exists to make fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Fully devoted followers are defined at Calvary as people who (1) study, (2) do, and (3) teach others the Word of God. The heart of this project is to contextualize that mission in a divided culture. Calvary values education as a vital aspect of sharing the gospel in the current culture and hosts Master Class[22] presentations as part of its biblical and theological education program. As a Pastor of Education and Discipleship, providing these opportunities is part of my ministry focus. This project presents one of these Calvary Master Classes in furtherance of the church's values and vision and to evaluate the participants' perceptions of the presentation's effectiveness for impacting their understanding and future practice of missional cultural engagement. The presentation is intended to inform and motivate effective ministry practice in and through Calvary Church in a

[22] Calvary Master Classes are live ministry events at Calvary focused on advancing mastery of biblical and theological study and application as part of discipleship for Calvary participants.

post-pandemic social environment where divisive USAmerican political discourse accelerated polarization, animosity, and even violence. The incarnational-discipleship-focused presentation is anticipated to bring the participants a fresh understanding of their role in the culture as God's living dialogue and function as a motivational and/or transformational factor in their future cultural engagement practices.

Goals and Objectives

The project's broadest goal is to help the USAmerican culture find healing and shift the divisive nature of current dialogue around social issues toward a healthier and more productive approach through the Church's beneficial and incarnational engagement. That goal is a desired effect and hope for humanity and human dialogue. The functional goal is to enable the Church to understand its role and find missional motivation to engage in the cultural dialogue as God's redemptive presence to bring about that healing and hope. The immediate goal is that this project will serve as a catalyst for members of Calvary Church to embody Christ through dialogue to bring health, healing, and hope to their surrounding culture. This project aspires to be replicable for the Body of Christ in other parts of the United States as well as the global Church, and the greater hope is that this effort brings new understanding for the ecumenical Body of Christ through both churches and schools to induce similar efforts and effects in a variety of cultures.[23] To that end, the project seeks to (1) understand the condition and roots of current cultural dialogue regarding social issues; (2) understand the Church's role in cultural dialogue through a theology of dialogue; (3) evaluate the perceived impact of that theological understanding upon

[23] Here, I am not proposing a new truth but a renewed or fresh perspective of Christ *as* dialogue to contextualize the mission of the Church in a catalytic manner within the culture.

the identity and future practice of the Calvary Church participants; and (4) add theologically to the field of scholarship in Practical Theology conceptually, through the research, and functionally, as a discipleship and education opportunity for the constituents of Calvary Church.

Definitions

Culture

Attempts to define "culture" have filled volumes. For this study, culture refers to the larger social community within which a Christ-follower, or local church, is situated. As dialogue is in focus, the definition of culture requires some separation into a distinct entity with which another entity can interact. It is insufficient to define culture, in this instance, as only the non-believing community. It does, however, highlight the community outside the church, or those operating from a basis other than the teachings of Scripture, whether they be pagans or those who call Jesus "Lord" yet do not do what he says (Luke 6:46). A fuller definition of what is meant by "culture" will be better understood through the context of the full study.

Church, Christian, and Christ-follower (as part of the Church)

These terms are used to identify the individual or collective entity interacting with culture. The Christian and the Church are those aligned with Jesus's teaching and operating in accord with God's instruction through the Bible and through Christ in the power of the Spirit. Christ-followers are one with, and part of, the greater culture as joined in dialogue with the Creator who alone is "other." They are separate from the greater culture as joined with Christ and therefore an entity capable of dialogue with the culture as defined above.

Dialogue

Conversation and dialogue may be used interchangeably in this work. Conversation can take a more linguistic identity within dialogue. In this work, however, it is used almost synonymously and takes on the non-linguistic aspects of dialogue. The essence of the term remains the intentional communication aspect(s) of interaction between (two-directional) two or more entities through expressing, listening, and responding. Dialogue is primarily understood in this study as meaningful communication between entities of personhood.[24] It is used of both the nature and process of conveyed meaning between such persons.[25] Although words are primarily in focus, other aspects of communicating meaning—such as body language and touch—are not exempt. Actions are included where they intentionally communicate meaning with another person.[26] As a key component of the study, the definition of dialogue, like that of culture, will continue to be refined. The most important aspect of dialogue for this project is understood through its difference from monologue. Dialogue is a two-directional "revelation" and response phenomenon.

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[24] Where the dialogue between God and man is addressed, the "person" of God and the "person" of the human(s) are the separate entities engaged through the mediation. Where the dialogue between the Christian (or church) and the culture is addressed, the separate entities engaging in the dialogue are the Christian person (or persons in the case of "the Church") and the person(s) within, comprising, or characteristic of the larger society.

[25] The essence or nature of dialogue as a phenomenon with characteristics is exampled in generalized statements such as saying, "dialogue in America," or "the dialogue between the Church and the culture." The process of dialogue is exampled in statements such as "creating dialogue" or "engaging in dialogue."

[26] A hug, for example, is dialogue where it intentionally communicates meaning. A hug is also a physical action with biological and material aspects and effects outside of communicating meaning.

Christ

Jesus is understood in this study in a fully trinitarian sense. He is simultaneously the historical man; the risen, living Christ presently indwelling the Church;[27] and the Word who, prior to becoming flesh, existed before creation in the presence of God and through whom all has been created.[28] No single aspect of the nature of Christ is always in focus. Each aspect, when in focus, also still contains the others.[29] The brevity of this study limits its focus. This limitation is necessary to allow focus on specific aspects of Christ relating to dialogue. Christ as God's *Logos* is discussed in Chapter Two as part of the biblical and theological study.

Contextual Scope and Limitations

The project's limited time and capacity narrow the focus to participants' perceptions of the impact of a single presentation at Calvary Church upon their cultural engagement. Future longitudinal studies and additional research methods are necessary to validate the effect of the presentation on actual practices of the participants as well as the effect those practices may have on the cultural context.

The theological development is especially limited by its brevity with regard to Christology. Jesus, as God's Word spoken into flesh, cannot be fully developed. The nature of

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[27] See Rom 8:9, Gal 4:6, and 1 Pet 1:11 on the Spirit of Christ.

[28] See John 1:1-3.

[29] This simultaneous "containment," is apparent in the study of Jesus's conversations. In those conversations, it is the historical Jesus interacting in actual events through words with actual humans in history, yet those conversations are present and known people today through the Bible, God's written Word in which Christ is ever present as Spirit, Word, and Word made flesh. It may also be said that the Christ present in the timeless God "before" time was "already" the crucified Christ as Revelation 13:8 suggests. That verse identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God whose death "was" (whether in foreknowledge, predestination, or some other timeless manner) before the world was created. The Christ of history, the present, and the pretemporal creation is one person in some sense.

Christ, as identified in the definition above, is largely assumed and not developed. Other aspects of Christology are introduced and not fully explored although there is some attempt in the footnotes to acknowledge a few of these aspects.

The project's focus on perception is not to evade the challenges regarding the objective or subjective nature of reality and its "knowability." Rather, it acknowledges the power of perceptions to shape real interactions. This reality-shaping power enables perception to be relied upon for at least two things: (1) Perception is a sufficiently reliable basis for understanding the actual health of the culture through the culture's perception of its dialogue; and (2) impacting a participant's perception offers a reasonable expectation of change in actual future practice.

Identifying the "problem" of unhealthy dialogue seeks to discover whether there is sufficient evidence of a need in the current USAmerican culture that the Church can address through a foundational theology of dialogue. The project does not attempt to provide all the reasons for the "problematic" conditions; a comprehensive diagnosis, prognosis, or treatment plan; nor does it attempt evaluation of the degree of such conditions or comparison to other cultures and/or eras.

A journey to anywhere always begins somewhere. The somewhere that this project begins is a somewhere of presuppositions arrived at from many converging elsewheres. Those elsewheres are themselves worthy of exploration and validation, and many have been addressed throughout philosophical and academic history without achieving universal acceptance. Nonetheless, some things must be assumed if anything is to be learned. The path to the somewhere this project begins includes at least the following assumptions:

1. As a biblically and theologically based project, this work assumes many things about God and about the Bible. God is. God is God. God alone is God. As God, God is

"other." God is good and defines good. God is Creator. Humans have been created in God's image. God reveals himself in and to creation through creation. Scripture is revelation of God and from God. As God's revealed Word, Scripture is authoritative in its presentation of human and spiritual reality. Christ is revelation of God, from God, as God-with-us in a fully flesh human and Son-of-God-Son-of-Man within creation. The trinitarian one God, in three persons of Father, Son, and Spirit, is also assumed in its orthodox understanding without addressing any nuances between orthodox creeds. These statements, loaded with terms such as "God," "good," "other," "revelation," and more, cannot be fully defined in the scope of the project. Well-worn theological identities of "Evangelical," "Protestant," "Charismatic," "Pentecostal," "ecumenical," etc., are also helpful and equally underdeveloped ways of conveying aspects of the theological "somewhere" from which this project embarks. A high view of scriptural authority, especially as it relates to human reality, is essential to the work's theological perspective.

2. As a study of human perceptions, the presupposition that perceptions impact interactions underlies the evaluative aspect of the study as much as the assumption that participants can know, can accurately represent, and will honestly and accurately represent their perception of an experience. Scientific support for the methodology will be given, but that science (as all science) also relies upon similar assumptions.
3. One of the greatest presuppositions of this project is that human flourishing is desirable. The value of human life and ambition for health across people groups, which includes peaceful if not caring, or even loving, interaction, is, admittedly, not a shared value or ambition, as the nihilistic family of perspectives demonstrate.

Chapter Summary

Current USAmerican cultural dialogue is perceived from multiple Christian and non-Christian perspectives as in a destructive spiral primed for healing and restoration. If healing for cultural issues is found in Christ, that Christ is found in the Church bearing his image and engaged in his mission. Aligning the *imago Dei* and *missio Dei* in and for the culture is the essence of the Church as much as the purpose of the Church. This research project asks and seeks to answer the following question: "Can a theology of dialogue reimage a local church's incarnational presence and engagement with the culture?"

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROJECT IN PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

Developing a substantial theology of dialogue is the first step toward answering whether that theology can reimage a local church's incarnational presence and engagement with the culture. This chapter places the project, and the theology of dialogue at its root, in a broader perspective of existing literature and human experience, including from biblical, theological, historical, and sociological perspectives. Components of the theological flow introduced in chapter one will be expanded and explored biblically and subsequently placed into conversation with related literature across an ecumenical spectrum to identify areas of agreement or disagreement. The aim is to substantially balance depth and breadth within the scope and limitations previously identified so that a theology of dialogue capable of supporting the research question is formed. A key component is determining whether dialogue in general, and particularly theologically formed Christian dialogue, can address the polarization and animosity identified in chapter one. A theology of dialogue is not isolated or novel but forms out of and interacts with a world of existing related studies, concepts, and scholarship, even if it collects and presents a fresh perspective.

The Bible offers considerable content on dialogue and is, itself, a dialogue in its entirety. The passages studied are representative of the direct and indirect biblical teaching on the topic and are by no means exhaustive. There is also ample Christian literature placing Christ at the center of dialogue with God and man as well as the center of dialogue with the Church and

culture. Selected works are not the only definitive works on the subject but are considered sufficiently representative of major issues addressed throughout Christian history and across theological perspectives to challenge or support those issues. Non-Christian literature[1] is also brought into the conversation as cultural dialogue is a human phenomenon of substantial sociological and scientific study.

Biblical Dimensions

Placing the project in perspective begins with Scripture. It progresses in an out-and-back fashion anchoring the subject in Scripture as the source and ultimate destination of truth.[2] Dimensions of dialogue emerging from this biblical study will be further examined in the theological section of this chapter. The following dimensions may be directly identified as well as woven throughout the tapestry of the biblical review and the conversations of Jesus:

1. Dialogue as a phenomenon is instantiated and initiated by God;
2. Dialogue with God and humans has been severed, yet God is always pursuing restoration through dialogue;
3. Dialogue has purpose as the "how and why" of cultural engagement form a commission for missional, loving dialogue with culture;
4. Dialogue has power as words have power and can alter outcomes;

[1] Organizing sources as Christian and non-Christian identifies the focus of their content and says nothing of the authors' faith or spirituality, whether that be Christian or something other than Christian.

[2] Claiming Scripture as "source and ultimate destination of truth" demonstrates the "high view of scriptural authority" presupposition identified in Chapter One that underlies the approach to this study and particularly the biblical study.

5. Dialogue is conducted through more than words including art, action, touch and other means;
6. Dialogue is interactive as revelation and response and affects all entities engaged in coming to know the other;
7. Dialogue as revelation and response requires hearing and listening;
8. Christ is the center and focal mediator of God's revelation in presence, power, and purpose in the dialogue of the Church with the culture;
9. The Church as the Body of Christ participates in God's dialogue of Christ with culture. (This dimension is the focus of the coming exposition of John 17)

Logos in the beginning

Firstly, dialogue as a phenomenon is instantiated and initiated by God. Genesis opens with God speaking and his words creating. In the beginning, God is speaking and making, seeing and blessing. The first clear dialogue is recorded in Gen 1:26.[3] That dialogue remains within the divine as God's unified and intentional decision to impart something of Godself (*imago Dei*) in the new human being. In the beginning, the Bible gives words of power, of effect, of affirmation, of purpose and intentionality. These words transform chaos into order and give life. Both God's speaking and seeing are aspects of his creative dialogue. *Logos* created something worth seeing and saying "it is good" (Gen 1:3-31). In addition to Gen 1:3-31, dialogue may also be implied in Gen 1:2, 2:7, 2:16-18, and 2:23.

[3] It could be argued that the first dialogue is verse 3, where God "said" and in response light "was." It is, of course difficult to identify the "other" to which God speaks. Verse 2 may clarify 3 as God's *ruach* vibrates over chaotic "water," but "water" as "other" cannot be identified clearly as having "personhood." Verse 26 is identified as most clearly dialogical in the sense defined for this study as God speaks to Godself and therefore "person to person."

Dialogue of God and humans has been severed. Gen 3:1 gives the first record of destructive dialogue as the serpent questions the woman regarding the truthfulness of God's instruction. Until this point, dialogue had only constructed, ordered, vivified, blessed, guided, and protected. The rest of Scripture is aftermath of that first deconstruction of God's Word.[4] The world created by words has been devastated by words. It is now a sinful and separated world.[5]

God addresses the separation and restores relationship through dialogue. The world corrupted by the dialogue with the serpent is the dialogically broken world into which Christ came as *Logos* in human flesh (John 1:10-14). Merrill Tenney sees John's use of *Logos* as intended to convey "the full significance of the Incarnation."[6] Substance is incarnated. It is a substantial Word and a living Word. W.E. Vine finds *logos* to be message or meaning expressed in form or embodied in word "not the mere name of an object."[7] He further finds *Logos* to be a "Personal Word" or word with personhood, deity, creative power, and connection as "manifestation, not of a part of the Divine nature, but of the whole Deity" and God's very image.[8] Tenney seemingly agrees with Vine that, in its general use, *logos* is not just letters or

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[4] St. Augustine writes that since the fall, sin now "convoys the human race from its depraved origin, as from a corrupt root, on to the destruction of the second death, which has no end, those only being excepted who are freed by the grace of God." Augustine, *City of God Book 13*, ed. Marcus Dodds, ch. 14, Gutenburg eBook; Rom 5:12-19 states that Adam's "fall" resulted in a change to all humanity that has existed ever since and is evident in the present reality of death.

[5] Bruce Marino defines "evil" as a biblical concept including both "sin and its result." Bruce R. Marino, "The Origin, Nature, and Consequences of Sin," in *Systematic Theology, A Pentecostal Perspective,* ed. Stanley M. Horton, 255-289 (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1994), 277.

[6] Merrill C. Tenney, "The Gospel of John," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: with the New International Version of the Holy Bible*, vol 8, ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein, J. D. Douglas, and Richard Polcyn, 3-203 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 28.

[7] W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 1241.

[8] Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, 1241-1242.

"signs" pointing to another substance as in Augustine's Platonic taxonomy[9] but rather "an expression of personality," which he connects to Ps 33:6.[10] In this Psalm, *Logos* as "Word" connects to the creative Breath (*Ruach* or Spirit) active in God's speaking in Genesis 1. Tenney writes that "To the Hebrew, 'the word of God' was the self-assertion of the divine personality."[11] Etienne Veto finds agreement with Gregory of Nyssa that "Word and Breath are inseparable in the economy because they come forth together from the mouth of the Father."[12] God's Breath carries his Word and in his Word is his Spirit. The pre-existing creative *Logos* of John is the same pre-creation Christ in, through, by, and for whom the Apostle Paul tells the Colossians that all creation came into being (Col 1:16-17). The world of dialogical brokenness is the one into which God sent his Word through the prophets (Exod 24:3, Deut 5:5). It is a two-way, dialogical Word because, when heard (obeyed), God would also "hear" again (2 Chr 7:12-15).[13] Restoration through the *Logos* is the beginning of God's "how and why" for missional, loving dialogue with the culture.

Dialogue as two-way through-word incorporates hearing and listening. The universe-creating Word who spoke through the prophets is the same one speaking through, and as, the

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[9] Augustine thinks and writes from a world shaped by Plato's philosophy, but he also comes to identify distinctions from Platonists in "fallen human nature, the necessity of grace, and Christ as Mediator," as Erik Kenyon notes in his dissertation. Erik Kenyon, "Augustine and the Dialogue" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2012).

[10] Tenney, "John," in *Expositor's Commentary*, 28.

[11] Tenney, "John," in *Expositor's Commentary*, 28.

[12] Etienne Veto, *The Breath of God: An Essay on the Holy Spirit in the Trinity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019), 50.

[13] Additional dialogical aspects are found in the Old Testament in the hearing of God's Word by the prophets, God's hearing of their response, and God's hearing of prayers and receiving of worship and sacrifices.

incarnated, "hearing" Christ (Heb 1:1-2, Luke 1:70-76, Luke 2:25-32).[14, 15] The hearing Christ asked questions, like the ones to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), and listened to the answers. In Christ, God hears, and, in Christ, God's Word is heard. In this same exchange on the way to Emmaus, Jesus explains how all of Scripture speaks of him (Luke 24:27). Conrad Gempf says of this encounter that the disciples should have recognized: "this is the Divine Revealer of Truth. This stranger rebukes, he asks questions, and he teaches with authority. This is our Master."[16] But they do not recognize him until he breaks the bread, which symbolized the cross, and brought to light their "fellowship with him, letting him be the one who serves…perhaps it is precisely the role of a good teacher to share of himself, and it is our notion of a teacher primarily as 'all-knowing explainer' that is at fault."[17] The physical and symbolic act of breaking the bread demonstrates the dimensions of dialogue as more than words and as a self-sharing revelation and response phenomenon (a coming to know the other).

Jesus is central as God's revelation and as being in God's revelation. Hebrews opens by connecting the incarnated *Logos* who created the world to the words of the prophets (Heb 1:1) and the lyrical prayers of the Psalms (Heb 1:5-13). He is the same substance as the Word through the prophets, or God's image in his Word (Heb 1:3). He is the living and active Word. Albert Mohler et al. find, "One of the most important assertions made by the author of Hebrews

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[14] Zechariah continues the word of the prophets in his prophetic song that John the Baptist will prepare the way of the Lord. Simeon, in blessing the baby Jesus, calls him salvation, light, and revelation.

[15] The speaking Christ is referred to in present tense as, since his incarnation, he has never ceased to be nor his words ceased to live and act.

[16] Conrad Gempf, *Jesus Asked: What He Wanted to Know* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 117.

[17] Gempf, *Jesus Asked*, 118.

in these initial verses is that God is a speaking God."[18] Jesus is what the speaking God is saying to the world.

Jesus is a multi-dimensional Word. He is a "hearing" Word to whom the Father speaks (Heb 1:5) as much as a speaking and creating Word (Heb 1:2) and a purifying Word (Heb 1:3). He is a two-directional Word because he is a through-word or dialogue making the Father known (John 1:18) and giving access to the Father (John 14:6). In this way, he speaks and hears in both directions: *to* God *for* man and *to* man *for* God.[19] To come to the *Logos* is to come to the Father in and through the *Logos* and thusly to restore communion with God who now hears (1 John 5:1-14). God's speaking and God's hearing are in and through Christ as Christ is situated between the Father and lost humanity. This betweenness is the basis for seeing Christ as the embodied dialogue of the Father and his children. Jesus is the beginning Word and the incarnate Word of testimony beginning again through new birth (John 3:3-14).[20] From this biblical foundation for a theology that sees Christ as God's dialogue, focus now turns to the biblical record of his dialogue with others or the Word's words in the world.

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[18] R. Albert Mohler et al., eds., *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in Hebrews,* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 8.

[19] Direction is dependent upon position; in other words, "relation to" determines "direction toward." Christ as two-directional dialogue indicates a dual position with God and with man. To look in both ways is to stand in both places. This is more fully explored under Christology.

[20] Christ beginning anew in the believer does not suggest a new Christ but rather a new incarnation of the same, always existing, and eternal Word in a new act of creation as 2 Cor 5:17 identifies.

Conversations of Jesus

The following conversations are either especially insightful regarding dialogue or representative of types of dialogues that Jesus had with various people. These conversations have social as well as theological aspects. Those social and theological aspects, especially as culturally located, are in focus as well as their nature and the approach Jesus takes toward them. Christ's dialogues display a consistent character throughout. Richard Mouw says, "Jesus's kindness and gentleness pervaded these encounters."[21] Other characteristics, including questions and listening, demonstrate not only Jesus's methods but also his heart and approach to the conversations.

The conversation with the Samaritan woman of John 4:4-42 engages the cultures of the Samaritans and Jews as well as the cultural, social, spiritual, and emotional realities in the woman's life. This interaction reveals Jesus's convictions, love, and manner with someone from a different viewpoint.[22] The story begins with Jesus's physical needs. He is tired and thirsty (4:6-7). The dialogue is initiated by Jesus who invites the woman to interact (4:7). He makes a request in the form of a question. The woman is focused on their cultural differences (4:9). Jesus is focused on the "gift" and benefit that the dialogue will give (4:10). Jesus discusses her relationships and, by implication, her social and emotional needs (4:16-18). Simon Kistemaker notes that the Samaritan woman's manner and time of arrival at the well may indicate that her marital situation resulted in being ostracized by the women in the community.[23] Jesus's address to her is caring and respectful (4:10, 19). Next, they have a cultural and religious dialogue (4:19-

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[21] Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, 41.

[22] References for the relationship of Jews and Samaritans are plentiful. Tenney gives a brief introduction to some of the religious differences and disagreements in Tenney, "John," in *Expositor's Commentary*, 54.

[23] Simon J. Kistemaker, *The Conversations of Jesus: Learning from His Encounters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 20.

25), which leads to Christ being revealed as Messiah (4:26). The dialogue ends with the woman going into her city to invite others to encounter Christ (4:28-30). Not all records of Jesus's conversations include such a clear revelation and response as this one, although Michael Barnes notes the "central dialogical motif of call and response that runs through the biblical text."[24] Jesus identifies himself as Messiah, and she believes and invites others to see him for themselves. Some elements covered include human need on behalf of Jesus (physical) and the woman (social, spiritual, and emotional), questions and listening by both, genuine care, search for truth, revelation, and response. It is significant that Jesus, the Savior the woman truly needs, starts by inviting her to meet his human need. The theological truths of Jesus as living water and the Jewish Messiah are clearly the focus of John's presentation, but the passage offers additional insight for intercultural dialogue for followers of Christ.

The Jewish lawyer testing Jesus's knowledge of Scripture in Luke 10 offers an especially relevant interaction. Part of the value of this conversation for this project is that it is a query of Scripture, which leads to Jesus sharing how God intends humans to interact socially. It offers a theological and biblical basis for cultural engagement. Once again, the cultural juxtaposition is that of Jew and Samaritan. The lawyer asks how to inherit eternal life (Luke 10:25). Jesus answers the question in the next verse with a question: "How do you read the law?"[25] The lawyer then cites Deut 6:5, "And you will love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and

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[24] Michael Barnes, *Waiting on Grace: A Theology of Dialogue* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 158.

[25] This author's paraphrase.

strength,"[26] and Lev 19:18, "And you will love your neighbor who is as yourself"[27] (Luke 10:27). Jewish students and teachers studied connections between words and phrases in the Scripture, especially where one passage offered a practical interpretation to a more abstract passage.[28] In this instance, Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18 are two of the passages that begin with *VAHBT,* "and to love." The lawyer uses Lev 19:18 to interpret Deut 6:5. He concludes that one loves God with their heart, soul, and strength by loving their neighbor as themselves. Jesus replies in verse twenty-eight, "Do this and you will live." Next, the lawyer asks, "Who is my neighbor" (Luke 10:29). He is asking for the direction necessary to lead to his justification and righteousness (to align himself). In other words, "to whom can I show mercy and inherit eternal life?" Jesus, instead of designating a neighbor, tells him to be the neighbor (Luke 10:30-36). He delivers his answer as a story that adds a third "and you will love" passage, Lev 19:34, "and you will love the foreigner as yourself."[29]

The tensions between first-century Jews and Samaritans were well-known, as seen in the previous conversation with the Samaritan woman. In this conversation, a Samaritan man is the one who proves himself neighbor to the foreigner left for dead. In other words, the Samaritan prioritized the *Torah* command to love the foreigner, while the priest and Levite prioritized the regulations regarding religious purity. When Jesus asks, "Who proved themselves neighbor?"[30]

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[26] This author's paraphrase.

[27] This author's paraphrase.

[28] See David Instone-Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis Before 70 CE (Texte Und Studien Zum Antiken Judentum) 30* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr P. Siebeck), 1992.; and Alexander Samely, *Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture in the Mishnah* (Oxford, 2002; online ed., Oxford Academic, 22 Sept. 2011), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198270317.001.0001.

[29] This author's paraphrase.

[30] This author's paraphrase.

the lawyer responds, "The one doing mercy with him"[31] (Luke 10:37). He is not refusing to say the word "Samaritan" as is often implied. Instead, he is continuing the dialogue with the scriptural phrase "and you will love." The lawyer's response references the last occasion of the phrase, Mic 6:8. One loves God by loving the foreigner as their neighbor and by doing mercy with the other who is like themselves. Seeing another person as more like oneself than either person is like God places humans together in humble relation to God. It places the Christian identity within the non-Christian culture as relating to their common aspects as fallen humanity much as Paul reminded the Corinthians (1 Cor 6:11). It identifies with the model of Christ expressed in Phil 2:6-8. Prioritizing God's Word and showing God's love and mercy to others places the Christian identity within Christ (God) as related to the other, not from the cultural difference of ethnicity or nationality but from the spiritual difference as in Christ they are a mediator of communicating (dialogue) God's love in word and deed.

Jesus's conversations included additional dialogical elements of attention, touch, and even writing (John 8:6-8). In Mark 10:21, Jesus first looks, then loves, then speaks. This repeated pattern of seeing then acting or speaking is one that the biblical writers present often. Jesus looks, sees, and gives attention in a dignifying and humane manner of engagement, especially to those that others cast aside. Kistemaker highlights the fact that Jesus often healed "either by speaking a word or touching them. Even [touching] a leper whom no one dared to touch."[32] Jesus can be found touching the untouchable, seeing and speaking to those others

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[31] This author's paraphrase.

[32] Kistemaker, *Conversations*, 60-61.

avoid. Graham Ward highlights Jesus "seeing, naming and touching"[33] as vital elements of sharing himself through dialogue. Although it is not known whether Thomas actually touched Jesus's wounds, it is known that Christ invited that touch as a way to personally, intimately, and lovingly be known by Thomas (John 20:27-28). To Mary in the garden, it was the use of her name that awakened her recognition of Jesus (John 20:16). Knowing and being known are both process and outcome of Jesus's conversations whether with a Samaritan woman, grieving disciples on the road, a student of Scripture, Mary, Thomas, or a leper.

The Church and culture in John 17

Jesus's prayer to the Father is a dialogue with implications for all Christian dialogue with and within the world. This part of the study looks not at the words of the passage but to what is happening in each verse and what can be deduced from the text relevant to dialogue.

John 17:15-23

15: Christ desires that the Church remain in the world but in God's "keeping." Tenney notes that he "did not, however, ask that they be removed from a disagreeable and dangerous environment."[34] Through dialogue with a dangerous environment, there is a risk of harm mitigated by the Father's keeping power.[35]

16: Christ declares the Church as having origination, substance, and community foreign to the

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[33] Graham Ward, *Christ and Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell 2005), 122.

[34] Tenney, "John," in *Expositor's Commentary*, 165.

[35] In Luke 22:31, Jesus tells Peter he has prayed a similar prayer ensuring Peter's protection from the accuser.

culture in the same manner that his origination, substance, and community are foreign. This declaration gives the Church identity with Christ in relation to the world.

17: The Church is made holy through dialogue – the sending of the Word of Truth by God and response of obedient faith by the Church. Here, again, Tenney notes the possibility of Jesus connecting God's Word of Truth to himself: "so as the Logos of God he embodied truth."[36]

18: Christ was sent by God into the world. The Church is sent by Christ into the world. Mission is unmistakable in this sending and facilitates an understanding of dialogue that is purposeful.

19: Christ's action was on behalf of the Church, and their holiness is brought about through truth. This verse gives an impact of Christ's transformative (sanctifying) dialogue as well as an indication of self-giving for the benefit of the other.

20: The word of the Church in dialogue with the world is the catalyst for faith, which joins future believers to this new community. Tenney recognizes the transition from Jesus's first disciples to a focus on future believers.[37] The purpose and impact of dialogue continue indefinitely and every member of the Body of Christ in every era is included in Jesus's prayer.

21: The mutually indwelled relationship of Christ with God is to be the same for the redeemed and unified Church now also in God as witness to the world of Christ's authority and purpose. Unity is necessary to faithful witness and joint mission. The unity sought is substantive and does not erase distinction of the unified persons, whether Father, Son, or Church.[38]

22: Christ has imparted a glory in the Church that originated with the Father and generates the

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[36] Tenney, "John," in *Expositor's Commentary*, 165.

[37] Tenney, "John," in *Expositor's Commentary*, 166.

[38] Tenney, *Expositor's Commentary*, 166. Unity and distinction will be a particular focus of the coming section on "Interactive and Relational Dialogue."

Church's unity. Athanasius and other Cappadocian Fathers will identify this unifying and mutual "glory" with the Holy Spirit, although Gregory of Nyssa develops it most fully.[39] For this study, it is less the substance of the "glory" than the flow from Father through Son to the Church back to the Father through the Son that supports the dialogical nature of Christ in his being, position, and work.

23: This mutual indwelling and complete unity for witness to the world of Christ is also witness to the love of God for Christ and for the Church. Both the nature and substance of dialogue are implicated.

The passage goes on in verses 24-26 to reiterate Christ's pre-creation existence first noted in John 1 and to express the Church's future hope of dwelling where Christ is going to dwell. It speaks of the "not-knowing" of the world and the "knowing" of God's love by the Church through Christ's continued "making known."

The exposition of John 17 offers many keys factoring into the theology of dialogue explored in this project. These keys include:

1. the conflict of the Church existing in a world it is not of;
2. the setting apart (sanctification) of the Church by God and for protection from evil;
3. the role that the Word of Truth plays in that sanctification;
4. the role of the Church's witness to God's love for the world;
5. the role of the Church's words in bringing others into the same loving, sanctifying union with God in Christ and Christ in God;

[39] Miguel Brugarolas, "The Holy Spirit as the Glory of Christ: Gregory of Nyssa on John 17:22," in *The Ecumenical Legacy of the Cappadocians*, ed. Nicu Dumitrascu (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 248, ProQuest Ebook.

6. the "knowing" characteristic of this divine relationship that is foreign to the world which does not "know" but out of which they may come into a knowing relationship through the ongoing "making known" to the world by Christ;
7. the two-directional work of Christ and of the Church; and
8. the revelation of God's love that is the purpose of it all.

Dialogue is present throughout this prayer, from the Word of Truth to the word of testimony, from Christ making known God's love to the Church as a separate entity, to the Church making Christ known to the world from which it is a separated entity in union with Christ.[40]

The Church and culture in other passages

Jer 29:4-7 is a specific message, to a specific people, at a specific time. It is not, however, wholly restricted to those specificities. Verse seven gives a posture and practice of believers regarding interaction with ungodly rulers that is consistent with New Testament teaching (1 Tim 2:1-4; Heb 13:17). It is also consistent with Jesus's teaching to pray even for enemies (Luke 6:27-28). Such a posture and practice may be applicable, then, as a general Christian posture across multiple contexts. In any culture and situation, the well-being of others can be genuinely desired and pursued as Jesus's prayer for forgiveness of those executing him demonstrates.

Jer 29 and 1 Tim 2 also both offer a reciprocal benefit to the believing community, which is neither the purpose of seeking the good of others nor an unappreciated side effect of that

[40] The position and direction of "making known" are important. The Church stands with the world in looking to Christ and with Christ in looking to the world. It is a dual relationship much as Christ has a dual relationship standing with God to the Church and with the Church to God. Position and relation play a vital role in the theology of dialogue being developed.

posture. A modern correlation is found in the concept of a "win-win" situation. Although the levels and forms of engagement may differ, the posture of a heart that genuinely desires good for the other, even enemies, is always appropriate. Although the win-win is sought, the responsibility lies with the Church and not with the culture to be the active agent of health and peacemaking according to her nature and mission as salt and light in the world (Matt 5:13-16). As Jesus's life, prayer, instruction, and death indicates, the role of giving oneself into the culture for the good of others is for their sakes (2 Cor 8:9) and has both the potential to benefit the Christian and to cost them dearly.

Romans offers more on the character of Christian dialogue in Rom 12:14-21. The Christian is to bless and not curse. Peace is to be pursued with the acknowledgement that it is not entirely one-sided. The fact that one cannot control the other's willingness toward peace is not an excuse for avoiding efforts at peaceable relations on the part of the believer. Actions beneficial to the other are added to desiring good and speaking good (blessing). Even beyond peaceable behavior, meeting practical needs of others, even enemies, is a means of avoiding the impact of evil, and instead conquering evil with good. The passage continues in Rom 13:1-10 to discuss the relationship to authorities, taxation, and the general community in living out the ten words (commandments). Loving neighbor as oneself is both the instructed posture and practice. At the same time, not every practice of culture can be engaged by the believer, as Rom 13:12-14 indicates. This understanding echoes the earlier presented in-not-of concept found in John 17:15-16. It does so with an even more practical expression of how God's love is communicated to the culture by the Christian/Church.

Summary of biblical dimensions

The Bible originates dialogue within Godself as a life-giving dialogue. Dialogue is both embodied in and enabled through God's creative *Logos* who enters a dying world separated by sin and dialogue carries forward from Christ who gives himself for and into his Church for the healing of the world. In his conversations, Jesus asked questions and listened. Gempf notes not only the skill with which Jesus employed questions but also the frequency, as questions are present in almost all of his conversations.[41] In his conversations, Jesus demonstrated three arenas of listening: listening to God, listening within community (both with God and with the Church), and listening to the needs of others.[42] When Jesus asks a question, he hears the response, so, in Jesus, God hears as much as God speaks.[43] In the conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus demonstrated empathy and willingness to interact and even initiate interaction with someone holding different perspectives and considered an "outsider" to his culture. He engaged current religious and cultural issues in a way that led to revelation and joy on the part of the woman whose social and emotional needs he acknowledged and respectfully addressed.

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus listened even though he more intimately knew the circumstances and pain the disciples were sharing. He gave a voice for their pain and space to share it. In a sense, Jesus bore their sorrow again in a Gal 6:2 manner just as Isaiah prophesied the Messiah would and as he did on the cross (Isa 53:4). He then showed them how to see those

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[41] Gempf, *Jesus Asked*, 11.

[42] Dr. Chris Owen expounds on these arenas of listening in James C. Owen, "The Rule of St. Benedict Contextualized for Southeastern University," 14-17, 19-45.

[43] Fuller development of the two-directional hearing in dialogue is given in the upcoming section on Christology.

experiences through Scripture and Truth. Ultimately, however, it was in sharing himself by communicating through the fellowship, imagery, and service of breaking bread that their faith was established.

The invitation to Thomas to touch his wounds is one of the most intimate and personal interactions in which Christ shared himself. Jesus sees. He invites. He listens. He touches and is touched. He knows, and he is known. He lovingly speaks the truth. Jesus shares himself in dialogue, but not for himself. To be in the world for its sake is a different way of being than to be in the world for one's own sake and benefit.

Cultural dialogue from the biblical perspective presented in this work inhabits the space between. It is to be positioned with the world as fellow humans who also need a savior, just as Jesus taught the teacher to identify with the foreigner. It is to be positioned with God in Christ, joined as one in Spirit and glory, as messengers of the same Word of Truth to the world for its restoration. The dialogue of Christ with the world and the Church with the world pursues the same mission. They have purpose, and that purpose is to bring life and restore humanity to the Creator. Benefit is the clarifying factor for the Church's engagement with the world. In-not-of manifests as for-the-benefit-of as demonstrated in John 17. The elements of dialogue identified in this biblical study can now be joined in conversation with both Christian and non-Christian literature to see where human thought aligns or diverges from the biblical perspective.

Theological Dimensions

Theological dimensions of dialogue based in the biblical review above are further examined in this literature review of both Christian and non-Christian sources to establish whether the understanding of those dimensions of dialogue are supported or challenged by contemporary and historical voices. The theological ground of this project is Christ's identity and presence as God's dialogue with humanity. Christ as *Logos*, or Word-In-Flesh, is the ontological aspect that identifies him as God's dialogue and not just as engaging in dialogue. This foundation is the starting point for exploring how theological thinkers and writers have understood and applied the biblical perspective of dialogue. That Jesus is both the original Word in Scripture and the Word-In-Flesh is attested by Veto (Roman Catholic),[44] who writes, "When the Father speaks to us, Jesus, as Word, is the teaching of the Father…more fundamentally, through them we receive the Word (of the Father), the person of the *Logos*, himself, into our hearts."[45] Saint Augustine sees the words of Scripture and the Word of Scripture as existing together; one being the "thing" and the other being the "sign."[46] C.S. Lewis (Anglican) seems to take this Augustinian approach to the words and Word when he identifies how God has chosen to reveal himself "in the Word Himself, in the Apostle of the Gentiles, in Scripture as a whole,"[47] and that in learning Scripture

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[44] An attempt was made to identify a broad theological or denominational perspective for as many referenced writers as was readily accessible. Although the goal has been to represent as accurately as possible the views at the time of the works referenced, the theologically descriptive titles are not meant to suggest a comprehensive, prescriptive, or restrictive definition of the author's past or current theological views which may change. The categories are given simply to represent the variety of perspectives included in this ecumenically approached study.

[45] Veto, *Breath of God*, 126.

[46] Christian Tornau, "Saint Augustine: 5.4 Language and Signs," September 25, 2019, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/augustine/.

[47] C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2017), 132.

we are "steeping ourselves in a Personality…to rebuild in us the defaced image of Himself."[48] In the words is the Word. He goes on to remind his readers of Christ's appropriation of several passages of Scripture to himself and the exposition on the road to Emmaus where "He accepted – indeed He claimed to be – the second meaning of Scripture."[49, 50] Reading Scripture is reading Christ. Seeing Christ is seeing the Word-Made-Flesh.

Even in written word, dialogue is not absent. Randolph Tate (Assemblies of God) reminds interpreters that hermeneutical "reading is a process through which the text and reader engage in an ongoing dialogue…the text and reader question and answer each other, just as in most forms of dialogue."[51] Even if one should reduce *logos* to "reason" or "meaning," Tate would argue that "meaning is the result of a dialogue between a reader and a text."[52] Alan Lewis (Presbyterian) says, "The very word 'Logos,' central to Scripture's most subtle and developed telling of the story of God's union with human fleshliness, entails the integral connection

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[48] C.S. Lewis, *Reflections*, 132-133.

[49] C.S. Lewis, *Reflections*, 137.

[50] C.S. Lewis' term "second meaning" can be misleading. Firstly, recall that Jesus's claim is regarding the Old Testament which was given before Jesus's birth through Mary. Taking "second meaning" to say that "at the same time" the Law and instruction to Israel was given it was simultaneously speaking, and speaking of, Christ, who is the Word and always has been in all of the Word is fitting. Jesus in flesh came second to Jesus in text in the chronological human history of revelation. To take "second" as "secondary," or "after" as though he either did not exist prior or is "alternative to" is not consistent with the pre-creation Word of John 1 or the fulfilled Word of Matt 5:17 and is inconsistent with the claim of this work that Jesus eternally *is* the Word and is not a container or transmitter of another, prior Word.

[51] W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 192.

[52] Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 200.

between speech and thought, language and reason, faith and the intellect."[53] Word-In-Flesh is message and messenger.

Awareness is forming that Jesus is not only the substance, image, and human expression of the Father but also the access to the Father. Both directions, from God to the world and from the world to God, are present in Christ. The second person of the Trinity is God's dialogue with humanity.[54] C.S. Lewis recognizes Jesus as the person and the message saying Jesus is "what the Father has to say."[55] That message and messenger are one indicates that Christ is what God communicates with humanity as well as how God has chosen to deliver that communication. Communication and communion of Father, *Logos*, Spirit, and the Church are formed dialogically. Irenaeus, in *Against Heresies* 3.24.1, locates the Spirit as the connection of the God-breathed and creating Word-of-Christ to the Church just "as breath was to the first created man, for this purpose, that all the members receiving it may be vivified; and the [means of] communion with Christ has been distributed throughout it, that is, the Holy Spirit, the earnest of incorruption, the means of confirming our faith, and the ladder of ascent to God."[56] Christian literature supports Christ as embodied Word. In Christ, God reveals, opens, and shares himself.

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[53] Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 135.

[54] Implications for the Church as the Body of Christ may already be apparent and will continue to be developed throughout this dissertation.

[55] C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 2001), 174.

[56] Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (American repr. of the Edinburgh ed., Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 1950), 458; The Ascension Theology present in this quote is beyond the scope of this work, however, the descent-ascent concept in which it is grounded is clearly a two-directional flow and, as Christ is the descended and ascended one, only further supports Jesus's dialogical nature as the through-word or *Logos* by whom, alone, the Church finds its access to and communion with God who initiates that communion. See Don W. Springer, "Irenaeus on Divine Ascent" in *Patristic Spirituality: Classical Perspectives on the Ascent in the Journey to God* (Boston: Brill, 2022), chapter 6.

The occasion of need for restoration of communion is the advent of sin as noted in the biblical study. Bonhoeffer connects sin and broken relationships saying, "Whereas the previous spirit-form grew out of love, the fall replaced love with selfishness. This gave rise to the break in immediate community with God, and likewise in human community."[57] The world of broken dialogue into which the Word became flesh is also the world within which Word-Made-Flesh intentionally and missionally leaves his Church (John 17:15-23) as his continued dialogue with that world. The Church is not necessary to the dialogue within Godself, but absent Christ as God's *Logos*, there is neither a creation of God with which to dialogue nor a means of communion between God and that creation. Jesus is the one indispensable to the conversation. H. Richard Niebuhr (United Church of Christ) says concisely, "The center is Christ."[58] The outflow of dialogue within God, of God with creation by and in Christ, and of the reborn Church through Christ, is a dialogue between God and the world through Christ in the Church as his current embodiment, literally the Body of Christ. What/who else carries the breath of God to bring lost humanity to God's life but the source of all life, the Word of God who gave first life and gives new life? This perspective sees the Church most fully herself when embodying Christ in the world. Stated another way, the Church can never be more the Church than it is the *imago Dei*. Any life offered by the Church is the life of Christ, whose resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Spirit birthed the Church. Jeff Myers (Evangelical) concludes that the vision for Christian cultural engagement in the current moment is possible because of the victory of the

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[57] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Clifford J. Green, Reinhard Krauss, and Nancy Lukens, *Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 1, Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 107.

[58] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture,* exp. ed. (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2001), 221.

resurrection and power of the Spirit through Christ.[59] Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Lutheran) in part "B" of *Act and Being* presents the possibility of revelation as being to the Church through Christ and to the world by Christ in and through the Church.[60] Dialogue is Christ's nature and purpose and, therefore, any theology of dialogue is both Christological and Ecclesiological.[61]

As Christ cannot be excised from ecclesiology, neither can Christ or his Church be excised from a theology of dialogue. Bonhoeffer emphasizes the Church, joined with Christ, as the present mediator between God and humanity. Mediation inhabits the space between to allow passage through that space and is also the substance through which communion passes. It is an embodied and not an empty space. It is a space the Church also now inhabits. As Jesus is indispensable to dialogue, so also the Church by the same intention of the same God is indispensable to the ongoing conversation between Christ and the culture. Bonhoeffer says, "Christ stands between me and an other, I must not long for unmediated community with that person."[62] The mediating Christ in his Church gives a mediating Church in the world. The Church, when it is the incarnational Church in the image of Christ, is present in the real and consequential dialogues of human experience. Ellen Ott Marshall speaks to the role of the imago

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[59] Myers, *Understanding the Culture: A Survey of Social Engagement*, 518.

[60] Dietrich Bonhoeffer et al., *Bonhoeffer Works, Act and Being: Transcendental Philosophy and Ontology in Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 81-135; As one of Bonhoeffer's early and more philosophically oriented works, *Act and Being* presents an initial establishment of his concepts which come to greater maturity in his later writings.

[61] Pneumatological aspects are present throughout this project but are limited to allow focus on the relation of Christ and the Church for establishing the relation of the Church and culture. That Christ cannot be accessed absent the Spirit is clearly stated in John 6:44.

[62] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, ed. Wayne Whitson Floyd, *Bonhoeffer Works, Life Together/Prayerbook of the Bible*, vol. 5 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 43.

Dei prominently featured "in moral discernment and ethical argumentation over social, political, economic, and biomedical questions"[63]

The connection between time and space applies to the Church's incarnational mediation as a Church simultaneously redeemed and yet still awaiting full consummation of that redemption. Simon Chan (Assemblies of God) says, "The intimate connection between church, kingdom, and world…can be maintained only if the church does not lower the eschatological tension of living in this age and the age to come…The moment it resolves either tension by becoming totally immersed in the world or by divorcing itself from the world, it ceases to be the true hope of the world."[64]

The Church as Spirit-filled witness to Christ has neither greater nor lesser purpose than participation in the *missio Dei*. The Church inhabits the same space and also fulfills the same purpose as Christ in the culture. Notwithstanding the absence of future perfection, the tension of now-not-yet addressed by 1 John 3:2 does not negate the capacity of the Church to participate in God's saving and healing work in the "now." Vondey, who supports Chan's eschatological perspective, writes that "Soteriology in Pentecostal perspective attempts to grasp a present reality in which the future eschatological state is not only anticipated but already experienced and practiced."[65] This soteriology is as much presently redemptive and healing (making whole) as it is pointing to ultimate redemption and healing. Niebuhr presents that concept saying that

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[63] Ellen Ott Marshall, *Introduction to Christian Ethics: Conflict, Faith, and Human Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), 46.

[64] Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 83.

[65] Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T and T Clark, 2018), 51.

humans do not come to know Christ "apart from a company of witnesses who surround him, point to him, interpret this and that feature of his presence, explain to us the meaning of his words, direct our attention to his relations with the Father and the Spirit."[66] God being known through Christ identifies Jesus as God's dialogue. Christ is the Word made known to the world through the Church in which he is present. This knowing is through witness that points to, interprets, and re-presents his words. It is then the dialogue of the Church in the culture that makes Christ, the mediator of the Father's revelation, known within and without. Jesus is central as the only "through-word" to connect a lost world to God. Mouw (Reformed/Presbyterian Church USA) notes that "Christ defines the issue, and solves the problem of life by his continuous action of revelation, reconciliation, and inspiration."[67] The Christian has this same potential to put into flesh the problem-solving Christ through dialogue with the culture for revelation, reconciliation, and inspiration of the culture. Bonhoeffer places Christ, and then Christ within the Church, in a relational interaction that embodies the revelation of God.[68]

Michael Barnes (Catholic - Jesuit) calls the life of the Church "an intrinsically dialogical existence."[69, 70] Participation in Christ is participation in his mission of reconciling the world to God. It is participation in redemption and resurrection. Christos Yannaros sees the need for an ecumenism which "will manifest a new 'coming together' through the encounter of people…the

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[66] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture,* 245.

[67] Mouw, *Uncommon Decency,* 160.

[68] Bonhoeffer et al., *Act and Being,* 161.

[69] Barnes, *Waiting on Grace,* 11.

[70] Michael Barnes and Graham Ward help establish a classical Christology foundational to this project although their referenced works advance well beyond that foundation and the focus of this project.

ecumenism of concrete encounter between those who share a thirst for the life which can conquer death, people who are looking for real answers to the 'dead ends' of the civilization."[71] He continues, "This is the freedom that delivers us from death. The Church calls us to realize our existence not on the basis of our created and mortal nature, but on an immediate relationship with him who called us from non-being into being."[72] Bringing restoration and resurrection is what Christ does for the Church. It is what the Church does in the world when embodying the Resurrection and Life of John 11:25. The Church not only points to but also becomes one with the Christ who makes God known through dialogical existence. The Church is the present mediation of the transformative words of the Word in the world.

Where there is transformation, there is change. In dialogue, the participants and their relationship to others are changed.[73] Absent openness to change there is no dialogue. Barnes characterizes experiencing that relationship as "risk and discovery."[74] The Church is changed through the dialogue of Christ, and the Church brings change through dialogue within the world. There is also a degree to which the Church is also changed by the giving of herself to the world just as Jesus experienced wounding and now bears touchable scars as witness to his sacrificial love for the world. There is no exchange without change. Bonhoeffer says that, in being born into Christian community, "The positions resulting from sin are, as it were, exchanged, or

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[71] Christos Yannaros, "Towards a New Ecumenism," last modified September 9, 1998, https://incommunion.org/2004/10/24/towards-a-new-ecumenism/.

[72] Yannaros, "New Ecumenism."

[73] Immutability is not developed in this project. Certainly Christ, the incarnate Word in time and space experienced change as he grew (Luke 2:52), was wounded, and died. Dialogue within time and space clearly is a dynamic phenomenon which proper Christology does not negate. Any implications or qualifications relating to the pre-creation Christ in the Godhead are outside the scope of this current project.

[74] Barnes, *Waiting on Grace*, 12.

transformed…The weaknesses, needs, and sins of my neighbor afflict me as if they were my own in the same way as Christ was afflicted by our sins."[75] These theological dimensions require further exploration through study of both historical and recent approaches to Christian cultural engagement in order to develop a theology of dialogue.

Christianity and culture

The interaction of Christ and Christianity with culture is well represented by Kevin Vanhoozer (Evangelical) who writes, "It is impossible to construct a culture-free Christianity. The Christian faith is incarnational, after all, and even God became not a generic but a culturally located human being. Jesus' followers can do no less."[76] Vanhoozer focuses on the need to understand culture and oneself as influenced by the culture, in order to make informed decisions and to determine appropriate actions. Christian dialogue cannot be separated from such intentional cultural actions. Vanhoozer's culturally-located Christ is a mediator who, as God in flesh, facilitates God's dialogue with humans. His connection that Christ-followers must be no less in their world than Jesus was in his establishes the intentionally interactive nature of the relationship between the Christian and their culture.

Bonhoeffer's *Act and Being* is a heavily ontological work that places Christ, and then Christ within the Church, in a relational interaction that embodies the revelation of God.[77] God

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[75] Bonhoeffer et al., *Sanctorum Communio*, 180.

[76] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Charles A. Anderson, and Michael J. Sleasman, *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 34.

[77] Bonhoeffer et al., *Act and Being* 161.

enters humanity and communicates with humanity in Christ. So, too, the Christian, through the Church and through Christ, engages in dialogue with God through reception and response to revelation. The Christian only knows their identity by revelation through Christ.[78] Reliance upon revelation ever more clearly connects Christology to a theology of dialogue. Karl Rahner revives Patristic union of grace and revelation saying, "In Jesus, God's communication to man in grace and at the same time its categorical self-interpretation in the corporal, tangible and social dimension, have reached their climax, have become revelation in an absolute sense."[79] Christ as social, tangible communication is culturally and historically placed revelation.

Niebuhr categorized Church fathers and theologians within five "themes" of Christ: against, of, above, in paradox with, and transforming culture.[80] He addressed the matter of Christian interaction with the greater culture as a problem "through all the Christian centuries."[81] He describes one indictment of Christians who disconnect from contemporary society, noting their eschatology and theology of living for another kingdom, as a problem of motivation.[82] He also suggests that, as the commission of the Church necessitates cultural work, "An infinite dialogue must develop in the Christian conscience and the Christian community."[83] In setting up the problem, he gives some history of cultural frustration with Christian interactions from

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[78] Bonhoeffer et al., *Act and Being* 151.

[79] Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, trans. William Dych (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1978), 174-175.

[80] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*.

[81] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 2.

[82] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 6.

[83] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 39.

Roman times to Marx and Lenin. His work acknowledges the challenges in balancing "loyalty to Christ and responsibility for culture."[84] His five themes have proponents and opponents. These themes have prompted discussion of both the applicability of his taxonomy and the proper role of the Church/Christian with the culture. Andy Crouch (Wesleyan/Reformed) asserts his own themes, which he calls "gestures," of Christian approaches through history as "condemning, critiquing, consuming, and copying"[85] culture. Niebuhr's seminal work seeks to establish the range of Christian cultural relationships rather than identify one "Christian answer."[86]

Myers uses Niebuhr's themes to understand historical Christian approaches and clearly aligns with the fifth theme of "transforming."[87] Myers' transformation can read toward the exclusivism that has characterized some approaches and against what Amos Yong (Pentecostal) describes as God's simultaneous "love for the elect and God's love for the world…serve to check and balance triumphalistic exclusivism."[88] D.A. Carson (Evangelical Baptist) wrote on Christian cultural engagement and "revisited" Niebuhr's work.[89] In Carson's view, approaches to culture all fail when applied to the wrong era,[90] which seems to agree with Niebuhr's view that no single approach is correct and others incorrect. Similarly, Crouch finds that in addressing the

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[84] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 149.

[85] Andy Crouch, *Culture Making* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 80-93.

[86] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 231.

[87] Myers, *Understanding the Culture*, "Christ isn't against culture; he is in it, transforming it," 499.

[88] Amos Yong, *The Hermeneutical Spirit: Theological Interpretation and Scriptural Imagination for the 21st Century* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 215.

[89] D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co), 2008.

[90] Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 224.

cultural questions, "the answers are as varied as the times and places where Christians have lived."[91] Timothy Keller, in his study and teaching on communicating faith in culture, writes, "This ancient debate will ever be with us: Should Christian preachers or teachers change for the culture or challenge it?"[92] Seeing the challenge as always contemporary in every era does not mean that past answers offer no guidance. It does mean that that guidance requires fresh application and contextualization. Carl R. Trueman (Orthodox Presbyterian) introduces his theologically-viewed exposition of modern culture saying, "understanding the times is a precondition of responding appropriately to the times."[93] His book concludes with the "practical truth that we live in this world at this time and are, therefore, required to respond to the problems we face in the context in which we find ourselves."[94] Amy Black concurs in her application of Niebuhr's taxonomy to politics, saying Christians "owe ultimate allegiance to God, yet they also have rights and responsibilities as earthly citizens."[95] Amos Yong also recognizes "earthly citizenship brings with it not only rights but responsibilities, and these, no less than praying and praising, are vehicles of the Spirit's work."[96] USAmerican culture is a politically infused culture on a four-year cycle that challenges the allegiances and responsibilities to which Black and Yong

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[91] Crouch, *Culture Making*, 78.

[92] Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York, NY: Redeemer/Viking, an imprint of Penguin Random House, 2015), 96.

[93] Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2020), 31.

[94] Trueman, *Rise and Triumph*, 384.

[95] Amy E. Black, ed. *Five Views on the Church and Politics*, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), p. 7.

[96] Amos Yong, *Who Is the Holy Spirit? A Walk With the Apostles* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2011), 152.

speak. Political engagement for the Christian, according to Steven Garber (Evangelical), is intended to benefit and stand in contrast to those whose politics has "no apparent concern for the polis."[97]

The literature reviewed thus far demonstrates that the question of Christian cultural engagement has been and continues to be addressed differently across eras, locations, cultural conditions, and theological perspectives. These perspectives reveal that the role of the Christian in culture is impacted by both the Christian and the culture. First century Jerusalem was as different from first century Athens as Nazi Germany was from 1970s America. Still, God has spoken to people in every culture and era through Christ, his Word, and through his Word in his Church. In every era, the Church/Christian has addressed the questions and challenges of engaging culture unique to that situation. The variable has been the form of the conversation. The constant remains the ongoing dialogue between Christ and culture. *Logos* still speaks to and through the Church. The Church is not removed from the culture but is a divinely, intentionally, and missionally placed part of the culture.

Dialogue and purpose (missio Dei)

Jeff Myers, in his survey of social engagement, dedicates a chapter to thinking and speaking to the culture in which the fifth subtopic is "why we should dialogue, and dialogue well."[98] Richard Mouw also works towards a *why* for Christian dialogue as serving a beneficial social purpose in the culture. Part of his *why* is resolution to conflict through "the Scriptures, and by consulting

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[97] Steven Garber, *The Fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving Together Belief and Behavior* Expand ed. (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2007), 83.

[98] Myers, *Understanding the Culture,*135.

our consciences and engaging in dialogue with others."[99] Barrett McRay, Mark Yarhouse, and Richard Butman find relationships and responsibility are part of that purpose saying, "our theological anthropology tells us that good relationships not only reflect our creation in the image and likeness of God but also are involved in our exercise of responsible dominion, using our gifts and talents in worship, fellowship, and service."[100]

Benefiting society, resolving conflict, and other health outcomes are positive motivators, but they are not the only or even most important impetus to Christian cultural dialogue. As noted in the introduction, missiology is inseparable from the Church's presence and interaction with the world. Although Christian dialogue has purpose beyond even evangelism, it is not in opposition to or ever absent evangelism. Mouw identifies the discomfort "when evangelism and dialogue become the watchwords of two opposing camps."[101] He suggests that "We must continue to discuss who among the wretched of the earth are most in need of our direct ministry…Christians can play a very important role in seeing to it that these dialogues take place."[102] Engaging dialogue evangelistically speaks to purpose more than method. Crouch suggests that Christian responsibility to benefit society and fulfill that purpose begins by asking, "Where have we successfully proposed a new cultural good?"[103] Focus is on the *what* more than the *how*. Purpose integrates the *what* of dialogue into a compelling *why*.

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[99] Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, 35.

[100] Barrett W. McRay, Mark A. Yarhouse, and Richard E. Butman, *Modern Psychopathologies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 294.

[101] Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, 112.

[102] Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, 178.

[103] Crouch, *Culture Making*, 235.

Comparing these authors' thoughts to the biblical study that introduced Jer 29:7, genuinely seeking the good of others, even enemies, is found to be both a godly posture and motivational purpose for Christian dialogue with the culture. Seeking good also means seeking peace. Stanton Jones and Richard Butman connect social justice to *shalom,* using Wolsterstorff's exposition of *shalom* as "dwelling peaceably with God, self, others, and nature."[104] Although temporal and social benefits are included, they are the overflow of the fuller purpose of Christian dialogue with culture. Bringing the kingdom of God to earth, as Jesus taught his disciples to pray (Matt 6:10), is the mission and purpose of intentional dialogue.

In addition to Christians being intentional about engagement and intentional in the purpose of engagement, they can also be intentional about their manner of engagement (the *how*). Christian cultural dialogue can exemplify healthy alternatives to the destructive dialogues in the culture. Mouw suggests the Church is the "model community in which other people can see how God intends diverse individuals and groups to get along."[105] In this way, the believer's dialogue with culture represents the Kingdom of God in human kingdoms much as an ambassador not only acts on behalf of another, but also represents in their being and manner the substance, values, and manner of those who sent them. Christ-followers are ambassadors and model a different manner of dialogue, a Christ-representing or Christ-imaging dialogue. *Shalom*-seeking as a purpose of Christian dialogue is present in a manner of *shalom*-being, or *shalom*-embodying, in the culture as Rom 12:18 teaches.

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[104] Jones and Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies*, 411.

[105] Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, 48.

USAmerican cultural dialogue can often be impacted by self-orientation. Myers notes, "It's common to see people ignore everyone in their actual physical surroundings because they're so focused on trivial communication with those at a distance."[106] Barnes says similarly that "many communities lead 'parallel lives' where meaningful interchanges are few."[107] Such an inward focus sits opposite of Christian dialogue that is primarily other-focused and motivated by "a genuine spirit of caring about the shalom of others."[108] Certainly churches have been known at times for their inward focus, but as Lisa Sowle Cahill (Catholic) reminds, the goal, after grounding oneself in the Word and Christian community, is to "move the religious community toward active participation in the broader or overlapping communities."[109] Active participation may be even more of a witness in a world of increasingly virtual relationships.

The Church's dialogical participation in the *missio Dei* forms from Christ's dialogical purpose. Desiring good for others should not abandon them to relational isolation even if only from the Church. As the first purposeful Word, the Word's purpose forms and informs the Church's purpose. Caring for the other brings the focus to a distinction of Christian cultural dialogue's purpose. It is for the other and not the self. The biblical study of John 17 has already brought out the for-the-benefit-of concept through a text emphasizing the believer's union with the Father and the Son. Larry Crabb (Evangelical) also sees two-directional participation and common mission as the Church bears the image of "an Eternal Community of three fully

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[106] Myers, *Understanding the Culture,* 149.

[107] Barnes, *Waiting on Grace*, 206.

[108] Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, 70.

[109] Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Can Theology have a Role in "Public" Bioethical Discourse?" *The Hastings Center Report* 20, no. 4 (1990): 10-14.

connected persons…[when] using our capacity to relate for the enjoyment and enhancement of someone other than ourselves."[110] This community is expressed by the Church as the "members' active 'being-for-each-other,'"[111] as much as it is expressed through the Church within the broader culture. The one precedes the other, as there is no truly loving and being-for-the-benefit-of the world until one is brought out of the for-its-own-benefit world. Godly caring, demonstrated in being-with as being-for, is part of the mission, as seen in 1 John 3:16. God's own self-giving in Christ is how love is known and is the catalyst for the Church's love for the world.

To equate the role of the Church in the culture with the *missio Dei* is to recognize much more than a temporal social benefit. It is to also recognize a redemptive role. Alan Lewis writes, "We love them to make manifest a sign that God is lovingly, redemptively at work among them…The goal of mission and of service is not to improve the world and create utopia on earth; it is that the world may believe and know, know that God loves the world and has sent the Son to deliver it."[112] By participating in the *missio Dei*, the Church participates in an active and living dialogue of God with humanity. Albert Mohler (Southern Baptist) writes that history shows "God has been active in unfolding the drama of redemption and setting the stage for the incarnation of his Son since the dawn of creation. Specifically, God has been active in speaking."[113] God's dialogue is redemptively focused. This redemptive focus does not eliminate

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[110] Larry Crabb, *Connecting: Healing for Ourselves and Our Relationships* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing, 2005), 53.

[111] Bonhoeffer et al., *Sanctorum Communio*, 178.

[112] A. Lewis, *Cross and Resurrection*, 457.

[113] Mohler et al., *Christ-Centered Exposition*, 7.

temporal benefits or efforts of Christian cultural engagement. Instead, it elevates that engagement above and beyond the temporal, fading, and dying realm to the divine and eternal purpose for which Christ came and for which Christ instituted and commissioned the Church. Vasilica Birzu identifies not only the mission but also the commission saying, "because we have, as Christians, Christ the Logos in His wholeness and integrity. It is our duty to try to share His integral presence to the others that do not know Him."[114] Justin Welby (Archbishop of Canterbury) writes, "In a world plagued by conflict, division and indifference, the Church has a crucial role to play as a community of reconcilers. Jesus calls every one of us to love God, our neighbours, ourselves and our enemies – a challenging command, with nobody left out."[115] Duty, command, call, and goal all recognize God's intention in the role and purpose of the Church as joined with his own.

Equating the purpose of Christian dialogue with the *missio Dei* also prevents isolating that purpose to the supernatural. Jonathan Welch puts Christian identity and mission in political terms, suggesting "Jesus establishes political identity through his person and ministry, which includes his life, teachings, and work of redemption…Second, Jesus establishes political identity for the people of God by commissioning the church as a political entity (broadly speaking) of heavenly citizens on earth."[116] To be embodied is to be physically and culturally located in time and space. McCray, Yarhouse, and Butman see "the value God places on physical existence…is

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[114] Vasilică Bîrzu, "Logos' Centrality and Expression in Martyria as a Superior Form of Dialogue" *Religions* (Basel, Switzerland) 12, no. 10 (2021): 842, 7-8.

[115] Justin Welby, "A message on Reconciliation from Archbishop Justin Welby," https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/priorities/reconciliation/message-reconciliation-archbishop-justin-welby.

[116] Jonathan Stephen Welch, "The Politics of Christian Worship: How Liturgy Cultivates Political Identity" (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021), 74, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

affirmed in creation and again through the incarnation, as God entered the world and had a physical body."[117] The *missio Dei* is wholistic and encompasses the whole being and whole relations of beings in time and space. James Davison Hunter writes, "God, then, does not speak through empty abstractions…in every instance, God's Word was enacted and enacted in a particular place and time in history. In all, presence and place mattered decisively. Nowhere is this more evident than in the incarnation."[118] The Church does not have a mission apart from God's mission. It is a culturally located mission. That mission includes incarnation of the begotten Christ as a human and of humans born into the Body of Christ incarnating that Christ in the culture. Christian dialogue with culture facilitates the real, practical benefit of bringing the *shalom* of the kingdom of God in this life as much as to the eternal benefit in the life to come.

Common dialogue: A secular appraisal

Moving from the biblical study and theological dimensions to common dimensions of dialogue sets the stage for locating Christian dialogue within a broader perspective. This section is by no means a comprehensive or scientific study of dialogue but offers a brief introduction to dialogical efforts and aspirations.[119] Building from Augustine's view that all truth is God's wherever it is found,[120] much can be gained from the non-Christian research. Harvard

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[117] McCray, Yarhouse, and Butman, *Modern Psychopathologies*, 307.

[118] James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 240.

[119] If God is Creator and all humanity is created in his image, then the lines between secular and sacred blur as even unbelievers' participation in dialogue is unknowingly participation in divine image and any good sought or achieved is from the only Good. (cf Luke 18:19 and Jas 1:17).

[120] John E. Rotelle, ed., *The Works of Saint Augustine a Translation for the 21st Century: The Confessions* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997), 172.

University's Program on Negotiation (PON) offers the perspective of a respected academic institution and represents significant efforts around cultural and inter-cultural dialogue within the United States and internationally. Even in the title of the PON an aspect of dialogue in secular purpose can be seen. It may be considered a negotiation of giving and receiving for a particular purpose. Christian dialogue has already been identified to be purposeful, but what happens when the purpose of dialogue is grounded in neither the *imago Dei* or *missio Dei*?

Getting to Yes,[121] in its 34th printing in 2011, is the international bestseller that launched the Harvard PON. In this revised edition, Bruce Patton writes, "Negotiation is a basic means of getting what you want from others…people differ, and they use negotiation to handle their differences."[122] Although not all dialogue is negotiation, all negotiation is dialogical. Even without the theological grounding of Buber's *I and Thou*, negotiation only exists where there is interaction of more than one distinct entity. Patton suggests that difference is negotiated. Buber, however, sees difference as entered. Though the approach and even desired outcome may differ, there is much to learn about dialogue from the researched perspective of negotiation.

Fisher and Ury begin by pointing out that in negotiations "you are dealing not with abstract representatives of the 'other side,' but with human beings"[123] and "failing to deal with others sensitively as human beings prone to human reactions can be disastrous."[124] The way to deal with this "human problem," they suggest is to start with commonality or mutuality and

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[121] Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* Rev. ed. (New York, Penguin, 2011).

[122] Fisher, Ury, and Patton, *Getting to Yes*, xxvii.

[123] Fisher, Ury, and Patton, *Getting to Yes,* 20.

[124] Fisher, Ury, and Patton, *Getting to Yes*, 21.

change "how you treat people."[125] Their fourth chapter focuses on seeking mutual benefit.[126] In the conclusion, they tout the benefits of their method as "less costly to human relationships…a way that avoids your having to choose between the satisfactions of getting what you deserve and of being decent. You can have both."[127] As secular literature, the spiritual position and perspectives of the authors is not in view, but, rather, the idea that their principles represent the position and aspirations of the larger human community.[128] This perspective, of course, is not universal. Not everyone prioritizes mutual benefit over personal benefit, or values relationships, but such ethics are common enough to be considered human cultural aims rather than exclusively Christian aims.

A Harvard PON daily blog on essential skills instructs students to "build a relationship in negotiation by asking questions, then listening carefully…if your style of listening isn't sufficiently empathetic, it won't elicit honest responses."[129] The PON, just as Fisher and Ury's book, does not address the ethics of winning from the standpoint of whether one should or should not pursue their agenda; it simply teaches how to pursue. This focus does not mean that either the authors or the university have no perspective on ethics or morals, it simply acknowledges that ethics and morals are not what is addressed. What stands out is that they

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[125] Fisher, Ury, and Patton, *Getting to Yes*, 23.

[126] Fisher, Ury, and Patton, *Getting to Yes*, 58-81.

[127] Fisher, Ury, and Patton, *Getting to Yes*, 150.

[128] As noted earlier, the Church is not exempt from the culture and will often hold similar positions and aspirations.

[129] Program on Negotiation Staff, "10 Negotiation Training Skills Every Organization Needs," *Harvard Program on Negotiation Blog*, August 24, 2023, https://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/negotiation-training-daily/negotiation-training-skills/.

agree that the manner of dialogue characterized by empathy, questions, and listening are effective and valuable enough to be included even when the *imago Dei* is not acknowledged and the aim does not extend to the *missio Dei*. The *missio Dei* is acknowledged by Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin who dedicate a chapter to empathy in their book on connecting with young adults.[130] Empathy, then, can be seen as a common dialogical value and one consistent with biblical and theological perspectives on dialogue. To empathy, Megan Halteman Zwart adds attentiveness, curiosity, and humility in her list of virtues that facilitate effective political dialogue.[131]

In one of the Harvard PON's free reports on cultural barriers, the first of four tips toward more successful cross-cultural partnerships is to earn trust, and the second is to respect differences.[132] Earning trust, according to the report, takes more than words. It must be backed by confirming actions. Although much of the PON concerns corporate and political negotiation, many of the principles apply across various forms of cultural dialogue. If Christian engagement with the culture is in some manner a cross-cultural dialogue, then the role of trust and the role of action in communication must be appreciated.

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[130] Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin, *Growing Young - Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 88-125.

[131] Megan Halteman Zwart, "Can Developing Virtues Improve Dialogue Across Political Difference?: The Case Study of Philosophy 291: Dialogue and Civil Discourse" *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 21, no. 4 (December 2021): 239-254, 242-246; Similar to Zwart, Mouw highlights empathy, curiosity, and teachability. Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, 57-63. Barnes also emphasizes the role of "empathy, kindness, compassion, and their variations" in Barnes, *Waiting on Grace*, 84.

[132] Program on Negotiation, *Overcoming Cultural Barriers in Negotiation: Cross Cultural Communication Techniques and Negotiation Skills from International Business and Diplomacy* (Harvard Law School, 2019), https://www.pon.harvard.edu., 6.

Fisher and Ury's desire for decency and mutual benefit both seem to come from an individual perspective. That is to say, it is about the maintenance of one's own decency rather than the value of decency itself or the decency owed the other simply as a person. In negotiation, the other is esteemed for the purpose of achieving a goal and not necessarily because their intrinsic worth is respected. Self-sacrifice does not seem to appear in their book. Self-sacrifice and human worth may or may not be values of the authors but they are not focal in this work. Human value, however, can always implied as one cannot value even themselves and their own desires absent a basis for that "deserving" position. Whatever the source, human value is a common value and dialogue can access and respect that mutual value. For Fisher and Ury, that is done by recognizing the other's interests.[133] Still, their appreciation of the other's interests is for the purpose of having one's own interests appreciated.[134] Although Fisher, Ury, and the PON seek to achieve positive outcomes from conflicted relations, other authors look into the roots of conflict between parties.

Chapter one of this dissertation identified the broken nature of current USAmerican dialogue. That broken dialogue seems to be lacking the mutual benefit and decency of Fisher and Ury, the empathy of Powell, the innate dignity of Buber, and the civility of Mouw. Nelson Mandela identifies some roots of conflict in saying, "When we dehumanise and demonise our opponents, we abandon the possibility of peacefully resolving our differences and seek to justify violence."[135] Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt find that in USAmerican politics "norms of

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[133] Fisher and Ury, *Getting to Yes*, 42-57.

[134] Fisher and Ury, *Getting to Yes*, 53.

[135] Nelson Mandela, *In His Own Words* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Co., 2003), 545.

civility and possibilities for bipartisanship have nearly disappeared."[136] Before agreeing with Mandela or Lukianoff and Haidt, it is beneficial to see, as Trueman recognizes, "the cultural condition in which we find ourselves and in which we are all to some extent complicit."[137] Recognizing complicity is a humbling and "common-izing" exercise as it locates the self with the other to address the conflict as harmful to both and helps avert the very division the conflict would inflict. As long as only others are viewed as dehumanizing, demonizing, and uncivil, the prospects for progress are limited. Whatever the source, and wherever an individual locates themselves in relation to the issues, at minimum, the condition Trueman addresses is a shared condition.

Lukianoff and Haidt write to address those who view that violence and intimidation on college campuses is "justified as a response to speech they believe is 'hateful.'"[138] They point to seeing dialogue in us-versus-them as a root of conflict where "life is a battle between good people and evil people, and if you disagree with us, you're one the of the evil people."[139] This view of others is similar to the barrier Mandela addresses. In addition, they look to concept creep of words like "safety," which they say now includes protection from opposing ideas, and "violence," which has expanded to nonviolent actions including speech that is perceived as potentially harmful to "protected identity groups."[140] Among Lukianoff and Haidt's suggestions

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[136] Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas are Setting Up a Generation for Failure* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2018), 131.

[137] Trueman, *Rise and Triumph,* 382.

[138] Lukianoff and Haidt, *Coddling of the American Mind*, 83.

[139] Lukianoff and Haidt, *Coddling of the American Mind*, 85.

[140] Lukianoff and Haidt, *Coddling of the American Mind*, 85.

for addressing these issues is encouragement "to engage in a lot of 'productive disagreement'"[141] and cross the line into mutuality by avoiding "us versus them"[142] mentalities. Here, they seem to agree with the Harvard PON's approach to negotiation of finding common ground and engaging dialogue to overcome differences.

Another root of polarized dialogue in USAmerican culture is worldview. Worldview, first coined by Immanuel Kant, [143] is defined by analyst James Sire as "the basic intellectual commitments we make as human beings."[144] It is that which is pre-thought or pre-theoretical and asks with Nietzsche, "What is Truth?"[145] USAmerican culture is increasingly global,[146] and increased globalization brings a collision of worldviews and truth claims that can become "problems that threaten not just to divide us but to destroy us."[147] Sire sees worldview battles waged by "not only ignorant armies that clash by night but intelligent people who clash by day."[148] How does worldview apply to common cultural dialogue? He finds in his study of Nietzsche that a God-devoid culture forfeits "all external standards for the true, the good and the

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[141] Lukianoff and Haidt, *Coddling of the American Mind*, 240.

[142] Lukianoff and Haidt, *Coddling of the American Mind*, 85, 243.

[143] James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept,* 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 23. Sire credits Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) with the first use of *Weltanshauung*, or "worldview" to "denote a set of beliefs that underlie and shape all human thought and action."

[144] Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 11.

[145] Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 28.

[146] Globalization, by definition, is not restricted to the United States. The world is becoming global through technology, trade, and travel among other means; Gerald Cipriani sees globalization as having potential to act as either "a remedy or a poison." Cipriani, "Dialogue, Culture and Globalisation," 121.

[147] Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 159.

[148] Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 157.

beautiful."[149] The subjectivity that remains offers ground to battle over those standards. Perhaps this subjectivity also influences Foucault who finds "no time for truth about objective reality…only discourses, and each of them is a play for power."[150] Recognizing the influence of Kant, Nietzsche, and Foucault on modern thinking, a common understanding of dialogue as nothing more than power play at worst and negotiation at best becomes reasonable to expect.

Worldviews simultaneously arise from and form culture.[151] Worldviews are impacted by and impact real life. James Davison Hunter sees worldviews as a cultural "dialectic" where "institutions cannot exist without the individuals who make them work, but the individuals cannot be understood outside of the institutions that form them and frame all of their activity."[152] Jeff Myers writes, "the ideas we embrace about the nature of reality lead to a set of core beliefs, which in turn form convictions about how we should live meaningfully."[153] As Garber puts it, "Worldviews are not abstractions; they become ideas with legs…enabling real people to make the hardest choices possible."[154] Myers adds cautionary gravity in remembering that "the consequences of bad beliefs can cause serious pain. Some ideas in history have led to death for millions."[155] Hunter similarly says, "Ideas can inspire greatness, creativity, sacrifice, and human

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[149] Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 27.

[150] Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 31.

[151] Sire writes that worldviews "are inextricably tied to lived experience and behavior" and quotes Wilhelm Dilthey as saying "every true world-view is an intuition which emerges from the *standing-in-the-middle-of-life*." Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 117.

[152] Hunter, *Change the World,* 35.

[153] Jeff Myers and David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: A Survey of Competing Worldviews* Second ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Summit Ministries, 2016), 6.

[154] Garber, *Fabric of Faithfulness*, 21.

[155] Myers, *Understanding the Times*, 7.

flourishing…under the very same conditions, other ideas can lead to extraordinary folly or unspeakable destruction."[156]

Differing views of life, differing goals in life, and differing hopes for life come with every participant in a dialogue. There is more work required (more empathy, more listening, more effort to identify commonality) when those participants are further apart in their worldview and sense of reality. Powell, Mulder, and Griffin note the maturity required "to be committed to one belief system while simultaneously recognizing the value of other belief systems."[157] Belief systems and worldviews are not entirely synonymous, but they are inseparable from each other and from the individual as everyone stands and sees from somewhere that is both formed and forming. To believe one believes nothing is still a belief and consequently a consideration for effective dialogue. Mouw insists "that civility runs deeper than words. It is grounded in the way we view reality."[158]

Paul Froese and Christopher Bader offer exceptional research on the role of religious belief on USAmerican polarization in *America's Four Gods*.[159] They "tend to agree that there are some basic worldview differences from which a host of more specific moral and political disagreements stem."[160] They claim that USAmerican views of God must be examined "if we hope to explain the root of our culture wars."[161] These views both influence and are influenced

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[156] Hunter, *Change the World*, 41.

[157] Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 113.

[158] Mouw, *Uncommon Decency,* 53.

[159] Paul Froese and Christopher Bader, *America's Four Gods: What We Say About God & What that Says About Us* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[160] Froese and Bader, *America's Four Gods*, 144.

[161] Froese and Bader, *America's Four Gods*, 144.

by circumstances.[162] Their research finds that whether God is viewed as authoritative, benevolent, critical, distant, or non-existent has more impact on political views of things such as morality, social justice, economics, science, and war than other predictors. These views matter because "we all try to pull the nation in the direction of our imagined ideal community."[163] This language sounds very similar to negotiation language and power play language. They do find more commonality in regard to morals, civility, and respect of others than is often believed or publicized.[164] Beyond this positive view of commonality they find another predictor as even more hopeful: "Belief in a loving God unites us more than anything else."[165] Because those who believe in a loving God are more likely to pursue civility and compassion, they see this view as beneficial to everyone, including those who do not believe in the same God or any god.[166]

Is there consensus regarding common USAmerican dialogue? The literature reviewed says, "yes." Several aspects of common dialogue support the biblical perspectives and teachings. The very existence of the Harvard PON exemplifies the value of dialogue in addressing difference and a desire to avoid, reduce, or resolve conflict. A desire for peace and peaceful coexistence is common. The role of mutuality, or starting from "common ground," is common. The roles of empathy, compassion, listening and the authenticity of wordless aspects of communication including actions are common. Many of the barriers to effective dialogue are

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[162] Froese and Bader, *America's Four Gods*, 153.

[163] Froese and Bader, *America's Four Gods*, 153.

[164] Froese and Bader, *America's Four Gods*, 82.

[165] Froese and Bader, *America's Four Gods*, 150.

[166] Froese and Bader, *America's Four Gods*, 82.

common. The role of belief and worldview is common and a significant predictor of some of the barriers. Value and respect for the other in dialogue is common. The desire for and expectation of benefit is common. Whether entered for effective negotiation or other reasons, dialogue has power to address issues, bring change, resolve conflict, and connect people groups through understanding. The Church's engagement in the dialogues of the culture civilly, peacefully, empathetically, compassionately, humbly, respectfully, authentically, mutually, and beneficially is appreciated and recommended by secular culture even if for different reasons than it is instructed by the words and Word of Scripture.

Dialogue and words

Words are necessary, and words matter. Niebuhr reminds the Christian that, "if he is to confess Jesus before men, he must do so by means of words and ideas derived from culture."[167] He goes on to deduce that, because they matter, words should be well-spoken, encouraging, truthful, and timely. In addition to writing a chapter on speaking clearly, Myers adds, "Godly caring is based on words,"[168] and "Words are important to the gospel, a spoken message."[169] The speaking God, according to Crouch, "seeks to bring into being a beautiful, ordered, meaningful world…hovered over the dark, informationless chaos, speaking a sudden and decisive word that set creation in

[167] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 70.

[168] Myers, *Understanding the Culture,* 30.

[169] Myers, *Understanding the Culture,* 31.

motion."[170] That picture of creation's inception expresses the intentionality and impact of God's "choice" of words.

The unprofitable words mentioned in Matt 12:36 and the unwholesome words addressed in Eph 4:29a are countered by the beneficial, grace imparting words of Eph 4:29b. Words matter. They should be chosen mercifully with their consequences in mind, according to Jas 2:12-13. Jas 2-3 seem as concerned with the dialogue of actions as with the words of dialogue. Words and actions matter. According to Jas 4, the selfish desires that lead to conflict also lead to a corrupted conversation with God and ineffective prayer. Motives matter. According to Jesus, the heart is the source of a person's words (Luke 6:45). James's focus on contradictory words of blessing and cursing (Jas 3:10) connects with Jesus's teaching regarding words contradicted by actions (Luke 6:46). Prov 18:21 expresses the power of words in the extremes of life and death. Prov 25:11 mentions the blessing of well-placed words. Prov 15, which also connects the heart and its words (Prov 15:14), begins with the course altering power of words (Prov 15:1). These passages are some of the ones revealing that neither words nor their effects are neutral. The words necessary to bless a society, turn away its conflicts, and even impart life-giving grace, are words that must be spoken. Heart and speech are connected again in Rom 10:9 where they are connected to eternal impact and lead to the necessity of life-giving words (Rom 10:14) and a sending community (Rom 10:15). The wealth of the messenger is the message. Paul was ready to speak that message of Christ without shame due to its power to save (Rom 1:15-16). The saving power of that message is in its substance as Word of God (Rom 10:17). Keller writes, "God's speaking and acting are the same thing. His word is his action, his divine power…as we unfold

[170] Crouch, *Culture Making*, 120.

the meaning of the language of Scripture, God becomes powerfully active in our lives."[171] If these words are the words of the Almighty, then they are most powerful words. Words matter, and words make a difference.

Words matter because they connect people and not just minds. They transmit substance and not just information. Through dialogue, words connect persons and not just ideas. The previous paragraph connected words with their power. This paragraph connects words to their life. In the tandem of power and life, words have being and act upon the inner person. Keller's recognition of the Word's power and action is joined with their life as his fuller statement continues "The Bible is not merely information, not even just completely true information. It is 'alive and active' (Heb 4:12) – God's power in verbal form."[172] Although Keller does not continue, Heb 4:12 does go on to indicate that the spirit-and-soul-piercing nature of God's Word (*Logos*) reaches the heart. Interestingly, the two-directional piercing of the Word is referenced by the Greek *distomos* and can be translated "double-mouthed."[173] The Psalmist, in praying that both the words mouthed and words of the heart be acceptable in Ps 19:14, is either intentionally or unintentionally acknowledging they flow together as heart and word are as inseparable as breath and speech. Matt 12:34 offers a similar perspective in recognizing that words flow out of the heart. What is communicated through words is the self, which makes word choice ever more meaningful and hallowed. Mouw writes, "Civil people watch their language."[174] He does not say

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[171] Keller, *Preaching*, 34.

[172] Keller, *Preaching*, 34.

[173] Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, 347.

[174] Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, 45.

they "should," but, rather, states it as an affirmative that they "do." He then cautions that "Through the centuries of church history, many Christians have been cruel and reckless speakers."[175] To read that statement in light of Matt 12:34 is to acknowledge the present imperfection of the vessels through which God delivers his living, active, and perfect Word. It is to acknowledge the time and space tension mentioned earlier of now-and-not-yet. This awareness also brings great weight to the responsibility of the Church to take Eph 4:29 to heart (unwholesome words versus words that benefit) and pray to more earnestly live out Ps 19:14 (pleasing words of the mouth and essence of the heart). Barnes reminds that "Words, whether of formal proclamation or informal conversation, need always to be traced back to the power of the Word and the inspiration of the Spirit."[176] Words matter and make a difference because they are the powerful, living, and active substance of dialogue as spirit interactions.

Wordless dialogue

Creative works such as art and music communicate.[177] They are intended to express, impact, influence, and evoke response. Eugene Peterson identifies several wordless elements in his work on preaching, including "the voice of the preacher, the congregation listening to the sermon, the worship in song and prayer and silence, the architecture of the sanctuary."[178] Creative and

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[175] Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, 47.

[176] Barnes, *Waiting on Grace*, 231.

[177] This section is not intended to disconnect non-verbal dialogue from words but, rather, to identify the *logos* sense of wholistic and embodied meaning in wordless expressions that are equally dialogical as the earlier inclusion of Timothy Keller's reference to the inseparability of God's speaking and acting represents.

[178] Eugene Peterson, *As Kingfishers Catch Fire: A Conversation on the Ways of God Formed by the Words of God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook, 2017), preface.

expressive works and actions are dialogue in the sense of this project where response returns to the initiator (artist). This "revelation" and response between initiator and receiver is dialogue even when not mediated through words. Because there is no dialogue absent listening, wordless elements exist in dialogue even when words are used.[179] One can speak to a rock, but not dialogue with it as there is no ability for the rock to listen or respond.[180] A rock can "speak" to a person and "tell" something of its nature, purpose, and potential, but it is not dialogue in that the rock did not originate its message with intention or ability to receive a response. Although people may speak to idols of stone, the stones do not "hear." The Creator of the rock, however, can be said to be the one in dialogue with the observer of the rock. He "speaks" through it, his creation, as it intentionally communicates his creative message and he can receive the response of the person hearing what the rock "says" of its Creator, whether that response is worship or withdrawal. Crouch, whose work is creative artistry as much as it addresses creativity, ends with a look to an Eden-returning eternity saying, "When we are fully able to bear the beauty of God resting upon us, when our work and worship are one, we will live in the eternal now of creators made in the Creator's image. And, once more, it will be very good."[181] For now, in the time between creation and eternity, every creative work speaks something of both its creator and its creator's Creator. Every creation evokes a response of rejection or worship of the one who spoke even the rocks into existence.

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[179] Myers, *Understanding the Culture,* 136.

[180] Ps 19:1-4 includes all the natural elements first spoken by the Creative *Logos* in the beginning. Limiting dialogue to that which is "personal" within this study does not deny the communication of the inanimate. It only places that subject outside the scope of this study. By way of acknowledgement, while metaphor is often and mostly likely rightly assumed in Luke 19:40, a cross-reference with Ps 19, Rom 1:20 and others open a larger sphere of the dialogical capacity all the dialogical Creator has made.

[181] Crouch, *Culture Making*, 268.

Listening communicates. To listen honors the one being heard. To be listened to says something to the one being heard about the listener's value of both that speaker and what they have to say. It is a most powerful, wordless, soundless aspect of dialogue. Timothy Keller writes of the relationship of the Church with the culture as one where "we speak and listen, and speak and listen, and speak again, each time doing so more biblically and more compellingly to the culture."[182] One could easily read that Keller is suggesting that listening enables more compelling speaking, but the context of his statement is regarding a two-directional bridge with culture where infallible Scripture is not changed but the quite fallible Church must change.[183] In this context, the very listening of the Church to the culture may indeed be what is so compelling. Listening in this manner can be considered two-directional dialogue. God is simultaneously speaking and hearing in his listening. His listening says he loves.

Touch is another wordless form of dialogue. Mouw writes that God's dialogue with humans is sometimes communicated through "sending someone to give us a hug."[184] An anonymous axiom, often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi exhorts to preach always and use words if necessary.[185] It is referenced often in Christian literature and places an emphasis on one's actions as communicating the gospel more effectively than one's words. Bonhoeffer

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[182] Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 103.

[183] Keller, *Center Church*, 103-106.

[184] Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, 183.

[185] The axiom presented is in this author's words. It is not quoted as there are many variations and, though attributed often to St. Francis of Assisi, evidence that St. Francis said or wrote something similar is lacking. See: Martin Saunders, "If necessary use words…What did Francis of Assisi really say?," https://www.christiantoday.com/article/if-necessary-use-words-what-did-francis-of-assisi-really-say/112365.htm.

describes Christ as "'haveable,' graspable in the Word within the church."[186] Jesus is a touchable and touching Word and therefore a reciprocal dialogue. Ward further expounds through John 1:9-10 that because of Christ's incarnation "we can speak of God's profound touch; the intimacy of his presence."[187] That presence is a healing presence and that touch a healing touch. Francois Viljoen highlights the moments Jesus touched a leper, a bleeding woman, and dead bodies as moments he refused to allow religious practices to prevent human benefit.[188] When Jesus healed, he touched more often than not. Whatever transpired in those physical dialogues, the power to restore and resurrect was conveyed. In no less physical a manner, Tripp writes, "Gospel community is intended by God to be incarnational, where we are to one another the look on God's face, the touch of his hands, his words, and his presence."[189] Jesus's followers also mediate the healing power of Christ through touch (Mark 16:18). One of the most compelling recent examples of communicating Christ through touching the untouchable is Mother Teresa (1910-1997). This kind of touch communicates the compassion of the initiator and the dignity it bestows upon the receiver. When Christ is in and through touch, healing is possible for both spirit and body as something of Christ, himself, is exchanged.[190]

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[186] Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being,* 91.

[187] Ward, *Christ and Culture*, 75.

[188] Francois P Viljoen, "Jesus Healing the Leper and the Purity Law in the Gospel of Matthew." *In Die Skriflig: Tydskrif Van Die Gereformeerde Teologiese Vereniging* 48, no. 2 (2014): 01-07.

[189] Paul David Tripp, *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 197.

[190] The reverse potential for harm through godless touch as much as godless words is a valuable additional study that is not taken up in this project.

Listening, actions, touch, and facial expressions, such as a smile, are dialogical. Each of these communicates, connects, and impacts both persons between whom they occur. Although there is no accurate percentage, research is plentiful that demonstrates the methods and impact of communication beyond words.[191] Giving "more than words" its proper significance does not abandon language in communication. Instead, the verbal, written, and non-linguistic communications are integrated so that, beyond texts, what remains of value is "this kind of inquiry, action, dialogue, and reflection…which integrate our thinking and doing."[192]

Interactive and relational dialogue

Touch as dialogue refines the interactive nature of revelation and response more clearly. To touch is to also be touched. One cannot physically contact something that is not simultaneously contacting them. To touch is to know and be known personally and intimately. David Budiash's examination of Rahner's theology identifies revelation as "the true self-communication of God. That is, it is not just that God can be experienced in all of finite reality as created, but that God can come intimately close to creatures as well."[193] Bonhoeffer speaks to the "knowledge" of

[191] David Lapakko identifies the problems with the basis study and misinterpretation of Albert Mehrabian's "7 percent verbal, 38 percent vocal, and 55 percent facial" findings in David Lapakko, "Communication is 93% Nonverbal: An Urban Legend Proliferates" *Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University*, *Mankato* (2007). Among the plethora of non-verbal communication scholarship is Judith A. Hall et al. "Nonverbal Communication," *Annual Review of Psychology* 70 (2019): 271-294.

[192] Darren Cronshaw and Elizabeth Waldron Barnett, "More than Words: Examining Actions of Power through Extra-Verbal Domains in Theological Education," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 21, no. 1 (2017): 9, 21.

[193] David Rohrer Budiash, "Fundamental Theology for the Trinity: Karl Rahner's Contribution," in *The Heythrop Journal* 57, no. 6 (2016): 921.

interaction saying, “It is in being known by God that human beings know God.”[194] Bonhoeffer writes intimately and theologically of the interactive dialogue between God and humanity as the “prayerful conversation of the child with the father in the Word of Jesus Christ.”[195] Christ as the Word sent from God has historically received much greater attention than Christ as the means of the believers prayerful, two-way conversation with God. Raimon Panikkar (Roman Catholic) clarifies that “dialogue is not a 'duologue', but a going through the logos, *dia ton logon*…beyond the logos structure of reality.”[196] Christ as God’s dialogue views dialogue as the substance between the persons on either side of the dialogue and not just an empty space through which dialogue passes. Dialogue intimately connects the parties in a new and participatory relation. It could be said that, in conversation with God, Jesus connects in a new relation where each now shares in the other. Kistemaker’s book is entirely comprised of such conversations where Jesus “engages the persons he meets in a dialogue.” [197] Engaging persons is personal engagement.

Part one of Ward’s *Christ and Culture* introduces and expounds the “economy of response.”[198] He ties together many of the concepts presented above in describing Mary’s and Thomas’s interactions with the risen Christ as “a coming to know through speaking, with and understanding the other, through desiring and engaging with the other, through seeing, naming and touching the other.”[199] Such interaction affects both of the persons in the dialogue as

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[194] Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 134.

[195] Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 161.

[196] Raimon Panikkar, “The Dialogical Dialogue,” in *The World’s Religious Traditions*, ed. Frank Whaling (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1964), 218.

[197] Kistemaker, *Conversations of Jesus*, 10.

[198] Ward, *Christ and Culture*, 27-110.

[199] Ward, *Christ and Culture*, 122.

Habermas says, "because those involved do not spy or eavesdrop upon one another as objects, but rather open themselves up for one another, they encounter each other in the social forum delimited by dialogue and, as contemporaries, become narratively involved in each other's stories."[200] Pope John Paul II, referring to this exchange, said that "Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some way it is always an 'exchange of gifts.'"[201] Two-way dialogue is possible because it is two-person dialogue. As Panikkar says, "This is what the dialogical dialogue purports to be: the method for the encounter of persons and not just individuals, on the one hand, or mere doctrines on the other…We never have an encounter of pure ideas. We always have an encounter of two (or more) persons."[202] Coming to know another first acknowledges the other personally and as "person."

One of the seminal works on human interaction is Martin Buber's *I and Thou.*[203, 204] Where this study has so far focused on union, it also recognizes that there is no unity absent distinction as there would be only one substance and therefore nothing to unify. Buber (Jewish)

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[200] Jurgen Habermas, "A Philosophy of Dialogue" in *Dialogue as a Trans-Disciplinary Concept: Martin Buber's Philosophy of Dialogue and Its Contemporary Reception*. Paul R. Mendes-Flohr, ed. (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 11.

[201] Ioannes Paulus PP. II, "UT UNUM SINT: On Commitment to Ecumenism," 28 (1995), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint html#-1H.

[202] Panikkar, "Dialogical Dialogue," 206, 210.

[203] Martin Buber, *I And Thou*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr (Centennial ed., New York, NY: Collier Books, 1958; 1987; 2023).

[204] Buber (1878-1965) is recognized as one of the founders of existential philosophy whose "I-Thou" relation forms a basis of dialogue that continues to impact multiple sciences and especially philosophy and psychology. For more see Gary Ventimiglia, "Martin Buber, God, and Psychoanalysis" in *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 28, no. 5 (2008): 612-621, and David Barzilai, "Homo Dialogicus Martin Buber's Existential Phenomenology of the Human" in *The Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy* 8, no. 1 (1999): 53-66.

misses neither distinction nor unity saying, “Thus, too, the authentic assurance of constancy I space consists in the fact that men’s relations with their true Thou, the radial lines that proceed from all the points of the I to the Centre form a circle”[205] and “as a Person God gives personal life, he makes us as persons capable of meeting with him and with one another.”[206] Buber’s existential philosophy locates being itself in relation and human relations as *imago Dei*. Panikkar expounds on Buber saying, “In the dialogical dialogue the partner is not an object or a subject merely putting forth some objective thoughts to be discussed, but a you, a real you and not an it.”[207] This real personhood is the essence of what it is to be human and is found in relation. Barnes writes, “to be human is to speak and be spoken to, to communicate and to learn…to struggle before the face of the Other, all of which presumes upon attention to that inner space where the dialogical God can be heard calling the soul away from a fixation on self into a richer and more powerful sense of life-in-community.”[208] Bonhoeffer says Luther’s Christian unity is possible “without implying any mystical notions of blurring the boundaries of the concrete reality of I and You.”[209]

Understanding dialogue as interaction between persons of both unity and distinction brings position and direction into the frame. The role of position and direction was first introduced in the biblical study of the *Logos* and the “Theological Dimensions” section above and will be further studied in both Christology and Ecclesiology. What Buber adds, and

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[205] Buber, *I and Thou*, 1958; 1987; 2023, 108-109.

[206] Buber, *I and Thou*, 1958; 1987; 2023, 125.

[207] Panikkar, “Dialogical Dialogue,” 209.

[208] Barnes, *Waiting on Grace*, 223.

[209] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 179.

Bonhoeffer supports, is the notion that mutuality exists in relation as both "I" and "other" are to themselves an "I" because there is an "other." Division is not only separation, but self-dissolution or death as Gen 2:17 forewarned. Where "I" stands in relation to God is positionally different than where "I" stands in relation to the world. Whether redeemed or redeeming, the Church is relating if it is alive. Crabb writes, "When the gospel enables us to believe that something terrific is alive in another and that something terrifically alive in us could actually touch it, good things happen."[210] He continues, "God exists as a community of connected persons…without some sense of what God is up to in another person's life, there can be no true connection."[211] Crabb is recognizing what Buber and Bonhoeffer see, that it is God who gives identity and connection to those made in his image.[212] To relate to others through Christ is to interact dia-logically or through the life-giving *Logos*. It is to respect the identity of the other as being an other also created in God's image. This posture enables standing "with" the other in relation to God and "with" God in relation to the other to find both life and being within the interaction.

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[210] Crabb, *Connecting*, 53

[211] Crabb, *Connecting*, 55.

[212] By recognizing the "community" of God, Crabb's statement can also invoke Trinitarian Theology. As a necessary concept for comprehending simultaneous unity and distinction, Trinitarian Theology is the focus of an upcoming section of this study.

Dialogue and transformation: Benefit

The literature reviewed largely supports the power of Christian engagement to alter culture for the good.[213] Ward's exploration of Christ and Culture seeks "not just an engagement with but also a transformation of culture."[214] The Christian faith is viewed by Myers as beneficially culture-shaping.[215] He describes the mission of the Church as being "called to reform society…putting flesh on Christ's redemptive work."[216] In Ward's examination of Christ and Culture, he acknowledges, "I seek not just an engagement with but also a transformation of culture."[217] Myers agrees that "there is something about the Christian religion that has made it uniquely helpful as a culture-shaping force."[218]

Perhaps Tom Holland's comprehensive history identifies more than others the impact on the world of Christ's incarnational work for, in, and through the Church even for "millions who would never think to describe themselves as Christians. All are heirs of the same revolution: a revolution that has, at its heart, the image of a god dead on a cross."[219] Holland recognizes the revolutionary nature of Christianity. Myers recognizes this revolutionary and culture-shaping transformation as beneficial. Johnson agrees that engaging the culture with "God's Word

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[213] See "Introduction," page 2 above for George Ladd's quote on transformation.

[214] Ward, *Christ and Culture*, 19.

[215] Myers, *Understanding the Culture,* 65.

[216] Myers, *Understanding the Culture,* 475.

[217] Ward, *Christ and Culture*, 19.

[218] Myers, *Understanding the Culture,* 65.

[219] Tom Holland, *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2019), 541.

provides solutions to the entire range of human needs."[220] The Christian has this same potential through dialogue with the culture to reveal Christ, reconcile, and inspire the culture.

Niebuhr keeps in mind that all such potential is limited, as knowledge of God and his purposes are limited, and yet the Christian community cannot escape the responsibility and necessity of working toward relating the Christ who "is not only the head of the church but the redeemer of the world."[221]

In light of Niebuhr's recognition of limitation, it is beneficial at this point to revisit Mouw's reminder that Christians can and do impact culture in both Christ-like (or Christ-imaging) ways as well as harmful ways.[222] Ellen Ott Marshall (United Methodist) points out that dialogue has potential to address conflict in a manner that "can be a catalyst for positive change."[223] Along with Mouw, Marshall finds that Christian mediators "regularly spend time detangling conflict from sin. We may respond to the realities of conflict – the inevitable striking together – in ways that are sinful, meaning ways that further rupture relationship or deny the image of God in the other."[224] Placing "sinful" in the context of relational rupture and "positive change" in the context of honoring the *imago Dei* supports the proposal that the Christ-imaging dialogue of the Church with culture can lead to life, and *shalom* through restoration of communion with God and one another. Juxtaposing relational rupture and positive change also reminds the Church of at least three things: (1) the awareness that dialogical engagement always

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[220] Thomas K. Johnson, "Christ and Culture" *Evangelical Review of Theology* 35, no. 1 (2011): 10.

[221] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 256.

[222] Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, 47.

[223] Marshall, *Christian Ethics*, 65.

[224] Marshall, *Christian Ethics,* 65.

transforms both participants in one way or another; (2) the responsibility to commit to the healing, wholesome, and Christ-imaging ways of being in beneficial dialogue; and (3) that loving, for-the-benefit-of-the-other, missional engagement risks sacrifice and wounding as Christ also experienced and invited.[225]

Mouw recognizes the two-directional aspect of dialogue's transformative power in saying, "Genuine listening involves a willingness to be changed. We cannot hope to transform others without a commitment to being transformed ourselves."[226] There is a knowing (meaning) that effects change. Listening joins touch as vital relational aspects of dialogue. Because there is no touching without being touched, it is always a two-directional coming to know the other. Just as dialogue is dialogue even without sound, listening also hears with more than ears. Listening, when the word means all that it should, means that something of the sound, sight, and essence of one enters an other where it is received in a way that knowing takes place. To listen is to give opportunity for the greatest human desire to be met.

Barnes' earlier reference to the risk involved in dialogue[227] is quite tangible as one must venture ahead before knowing if the other is friend or foe, but there is another more subtle, and perhaps more subversive, risk. It is a risk inherent in being known. It is a risk that is entered through the vulnerability of the true self being seen, heard, and known. Frederick Buechner writes poetically of the all-too-human desire and risk saying, "by and large the human family all has the same secrets, which are both telling and very important to tell…they tell what is perhaps

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[225] Heb 12:2 references Jesus's expectation of joy for which he sacrificed, and John 10:18 is among the passages that indicate he suffered willingly and of his own volition.

[226] Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, 126.

[227] Barnes, *Waiting on Grace*, 12.

the central paradox of our condition – that what we hunger for perhaps more than anything else is to be known in our full humanness, and yet that is often just what we also fear more than anything else."[228] Fear is eradicated in the presence of the Prince of *Shalom*. If relational dialogue transforms, it does so through revelation or "coming to know." It is accessed only when there is listening of one to an "other." *Logos* has come for this very purpose, and for this purpose the *Shema* is the only valid (life-giving) response leading to *shalom*. Buechner's autobiographical, poetic narrative ends with the risk of his greatest hope of God's existence and his eternal life being disappointed, and, yet, he finds that hope all the more hopeful. He writes, "Maybe the only way to know finally this side of falling off that precipice ourselves is to stop speaking and thinking and reading about it so much and to start watching and listening…I am talking about prayer – prayer not as speaking to God…prayer as being deeply silent, as watching and listening for God to speak."[229] The relational aspect of dialogue from the previous section is the environment in which the transformational aspect is realized. If Buechner is right; if Buber is right; if Pope John Paul II, Richard Mouw, Timothy Keller, Larry Crabb, and Simon Chan are correct; then spiritual transformation comes from true knowing and being truly known by the exchange of being heard and received into God by his hearing Christ through his listening Church. It is a transformation of faith that comes by hearing and hearing by the *Logos*.[230]

What emerges from the conversation of the literature reviewed is that dialogue is relationally transformative through its revelatory purpose and power. Combining purpose,

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[228] Frederick Buechner, *Telling Secrets* (New York, NY: Harper Colling, 1991), 2-3.

[229] Buechner, *Telling Secrets*, 104.

[230] Rom 10:17.

power, and interaction produces dialogue that not only can but actually does affect all engaged. Through hearing, knowing, and being known, the greatest human needs are addressed and both the individuals and their relations are altered through the exchange.

Christology and dialogue

Christian literature places Christ at the center of the discussion of dialogue, whether with God and man or Christians and their culture. Ward says engagement with Christology is "to foster the economy whereby God is made known to us. To do Christology is to inscribe Christ into the times and cultures we inhabit."[231] He continues that, "The basis for this engagement between Christ and culture…and the resulting Christology is significant."[232] Who Christ is produces what Christ does. As Bonhoeffer's theology developed, he recognized that Christ was one "who claims not only to bring the divine office and Word but actually to be that very office and Word…not only to have authority, but to be authority itself…the very revelation of God."[233] In being Word and revelation, Christ is dialogue. His being is God's two-way communication. Where he is, there is communion with God.[234] Seeing Christ as God's communion and not only as facilitating communion allows a Christological evaluation of the aspects of dialogue presented thus far.

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[231] Ward, *Christ and Culture*, 2.

[232] Ward, *Christ and Culture*, 17.

[233] Dietrich Bonhoeffer et al., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 12, Berlin, 1932-1933* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 308.

[234] Jesus as present communion evokes the manner in which Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God (see Matt 12:28 and Luke 17:21).

Christ as God's *Logos* has been defined. The full depth of that reality, however, cannot be exhausted as it contains the vast elements of coming to know God as he makes himself known and knowable through Christ. Some additional and very practical elements of a Christology of dialogue can and must be further explored. The "hearing" of the *Logos*, the position and direction of the *Logos*, and the embodiment of the "graspable" *Logos*[235] are among the subjects of this section.

The approach of this chapter was described in the introduction as out-and-back or from-and-returning-to Scripture. Inside and alongside theological voices, Word in and as Scripture is always speaking and must be heard. The *Shema* of Deut 6 is echoed in the calls of Matt 11:15 and Rev 2 and 3. Those passages call the reader to "hear." Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola say, "The fundamental action word in the Bible as it concerns the voice of the living God is not obey or submit. It is listen."[236] The very voice inviting and commanding hearing in humans is the creative *Logos* who gave ears to those beings in the first place. Humanity was created through Christ to hear Christ, but also to be heard in Christ. Hearing humans are created in the *imago Dei* to hear as God hears. Ps 94:9 reveals that the God who gave ears and eyes is a hearing and seeing God. The heard Word is a hearing Word.

If the hearing Christ is the creative Word who gave ears in his image, it is also the speaking Christ who gave and gives humans a voice and brings back the consideration of position and direction. If a Christology of dialogue is to be complete, then Christ is not only the voice of God to humanity, but the voice of humanity to God. He stands with and proceeds from

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[235] Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being,* 91.

[236] Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola, *Jesus Speaks: Learning to Recognize and Respond to the Lord's Voice* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2016), xvii.

God to humanity as God's very essence and Word. He simultaneously stands with humanity as fellow-human and priestly representative of humanity to the Father (Phil 2:7, Heb 4:12, Rom 8:34, 1 John 2:1). He is healer and life-giver in the direction toward humanity. He is advocate and intercessor in the direction toward the Father. Hunter finds "God's faithful presence is his identification with us…God knows our joys, our hopes, our needs, and our longings, as well as our cowardice, our failures, our betrayals, and our sufferings. Yet more than this God, through Christ, took them on himself – experienced them and became like us."[237] Embodiment of Christ cannot and must not be separated from God's identification with humanity. Pieter Van Niekerk and Nelus Niemandt maintain the deep, incarnational impact of God, himself, in a real and vulnerable human writing, "The *Logos* becomes flesh and tangible. God became material, visible, exposed, and assumes flesh in an earthly Jesus."[238]

Knowing Christ as embodied Word is as culturally dialogical as it is missionally soteriological. "Incarnation is the only adequate reply to the challenges of dissolution; the erosion of trust between word and world and the problems that attend it,"[239] writes Hunter. Hunter goes on to present Jesus as God's spoken demonstration that he is active in pursuing restored relationship with humanity.[240] God sending Jesus is how his loving, pursuing nature is known (1 John 4:9).

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[237] Hunter, *Change the World*, 242.

[238] Pieter Van Niekerk and Nelus Niemandt, "The Radical Embodiment of God for a Christology of a New Era," in *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 75, no. 1 (2019): 3.

[239] Hunter, *Change the World*, 241.

[240] Hunter, *Change the World*, 241.

Jesus is heard and hearing, seen and seeing, touched and touching *Logos* through whom, and only through whom, the communion of God and people is mediated (John 14:6). Prayer as communion is facilitated in his name through mutual abiding (John 14:13-14, 15:7). He is the one who stands on both sides and occupies the space between. The cross as much as anything else is the passage of communion with God through the literal body of Jesus Christ. If there is no Jesus, there is no John 17 prayer of unity with God. Aside from the obvious (that Jesus is the one praying), the right and means of unity also do not exist absent Christ and him crucified. He embodies prayer, connection, and communion. He is what is between as substance and a Person. Can Word-In-Flesh mean anything less?

Christ as God's dialogue is consistent with the nature and characteristics of dialogue. He embodies the space between the Person of God and the people of earth. He is a two-directional Word speaking to people for the Father and to the Father for his fellow humans. His words have power and transform. He embodies the conversation humbly, civilly, peacefully, empathetically, compassionately, respectfully, authentically, mutually, and for-the-benefit-of humanity and not his own. He finds common ground identifying with and as a human. His interaction is good, true, and beautiful. He speaks and hears more than words. He touches and is touched, affecting both himself and the other in every exchange as demonstrated by the wounds in his human body from his coming into contact with the sin wound of humanity. He crosses divides and brings *shalom* to conflict across worldviews. He relates and makes relationship possible. He is the medium and mediation of communion with God. What has been studied regarding dialogue can be applied to Christ in his being, purpose, action, and impact. Biblically, he is the speaking, creative, spoken, and begotten *Logos* who gives light and life as he covers the sin divide to heal, save, and restore those who have eyes to see and ears to hear him. The one who touches him, touches God. The

one who hears him, hears God. The one who speaks to him, God hears, and knows, and is known by them. Christ is dialogue Person to person.

Christ as dialogue gives the basis for a dialogical Church in the world. Walter Kasper writes, "Christology has to do at least in rudimentary terms with the relation between Christianity and culture, politics and so forth."[241] This real-world relational reality leads to the impact of Ecclesiology upon a theology of dialogue, but first, as things and their effects are merging, as Father, Son, and Church, and even hearing and seeing are aligning, a glance must be made in the direction of unity and distinction. The stabilizing theological understanding that maintains unity and distinction is the nature, essence, and existence of the triune God.

Trinitarian theology and dialogue

An orthodox view of the Trinity enables an understanding of human life as wholly other than God, although its *telos* is union with God. It was not sin that made humans distinct, but God's own plurality wherein neither distinction nor unity is lost.[242] Sin relationally divided the already distinct. God gave distinction to humanity when Word created them in the image of the distinct and unified Father, Son, and Spirit. Pope Francis finds that effective interreligious dialogue begins with "the duty to respect one's own identity and that of others."[243] The Pope's basis for

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[241] Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (London; New York: Burns & Oates, 1976), 20.

[242] What sin did in setting what was "other" in opposition is neither possible nor necessary to cover in this study. It is, however, the most significant factor in both the divisive nature of dialogue absent Christ and the redemptive nature of Christ as dialogue and dialogue in/through Christ.

[243] Paolo Gamberini, "The 'Logos' of Faith in the Era of Pope Francis" in *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (2019): 392-408, 393.

dialogue is the *imago Dei*. If respecting identity is necessary between those made in the image of God, then a basis in discreet identities must be found in God. In C.S. Lewis' words, "The words 'God is love' have no real meaning unless God contains at least two Persons."[244] Kerry D. McRoberts (Assemblies of God) confronts the challenges of a three-in-one God as mystery that must rely, as Martin Luther did, on the words of Scripture to deal with what is paradoxical to the human mind.[245] He recalls that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity came through great debate and cautions that still today the same ground may be retread "into one of the two extremes: suppression of the evidence in favor of unity (resulting in Unitarianism, i.e., one solitary God) or misuse of the evidence for triunity (resulting in tritheism, i.e., three separate gods)."[246] McRoberts also cautions that the goal of accepting the Trinity is not to explain God but "to distinguish Trinitarian orthodoxy from heretical Modalistic formulas."[247]

Chan envisions the Church joined into the Trinity after the manner of Jesus's prayer in John 17. Chan sacrifices neither distinction nor unity when he writes, "The story of the church is what it is because it is the story of the Spirit who constitutes it, the continuation of the triune economy of salvation."[248] As a body birthed by the Spirit of people in the image of God, it is God's very triune nature the Church joins. It is for this reason Chan can see the unity of the

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[244] C.S Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 174.

[245] Kerry D. McRoberts, "The Holy Trinity" in *Systematic Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective*, ed. Stanley M. Horton (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 1994), 145-146; This work is insufficient to address "mystery" in Scripture. It is, however, worth noting that its use in the New Testament is often tied to revelation as Matt 11:25, Eph 3:9, and Rom 16:25-26 illustrate. Mystery is not used in a Gnostic manner but to describe what God reveals of himself and his purpose.

[246] McRoberts, "The Holy Trinity," 146-147.

[247] McRoberts, "The Holy Trinity," 167.

[248] Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 36.

Church as not precluding its diversity but necessitating a "diversity existing in perichoretic harmony."[249] The birthing of the Church by the Spirit connects the Spirit of Christ with the very *Ruach* of the *Logos* that gave human life in the image of God and restores that life in new birth.

The harmony of the distinct and unified Persons of the Trinity as source of revelation fills Rahner's theology as he writes, "Each one of the three divine persons communicates himself to man in gratuitous grace in his own personal particularity and diversity. This trinitarian communication is the ontological ground of man's life of grace."[250] Chan's enjoining of the Church to the Trinity seems to echo Rahner's grace that flows from the distinct and equally divine Persons. Francis Schaeffer expresses the personal nature of relationship with God as consistent with God's essence as Person when he writes, "Life begins with a God who is infinite and personal, with a strong emphasis on his personality…He will not violate that which He Himself is, nor will He violate that which He has made us to be. So God Himself always deals with man on a basis of personal relationship. It is always a person-to-person relationship."[251] Rahner brings together the incarnate Word as revelation of Trinity to man and "personally" mediating in each direction through the mutually indwelling Father, *Logos*, and Spirit:

> The Father gives himself to us too as *Father,* that is, precisely because and insofar as he himself, being essentially with *himself,* utters himself and *in this way* communicates the Son as his own, personal self-manifestation; and because and insofar as the Father and the Son (receiving from the Father), welcoming each

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[249] Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 50.

[250] Karl Rahner and J. F Donceel, *The Trinity* (London: Burns & Oates, 2001), 34-35.

[251] Francis A. Schaeffer, *True Spirituality* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 215.

> other in love, drawn and returning to each other, communicate themselves *in this way,* as received in mutual love, that is, as Holy Spirit. God relates to us in a threefold manner, and this threefold, free, and gratuitous relation to us *is* not merely a copy or an analogy of the inner Trinity, but this Trinity itself, albeit as freely and gratuitously communicated.[252]

If, as Rahner presents, God gives himself in giving Christ, then those joined to Christ are joined to God as joint or fellow heirs and equally children of the Father (Rom 8:17).[253]

Jesus who identifies himself as one with the Father (John 10:30) and the Father embodied (John 14:9) also prays to the Father (Luke 23:34, John 17). In John 14:16-17, Jesus says he will pray to the Father to send the Spirit. Jesus does not indicate any ambivalence or confusion about himself, the father, or the Spirit as either distinct or fully unified. In John 17:22-23, Jesus prays for the same unity he has with the Father to characterize the unity of the Church with the Father and Son. He describes this unity as a mutual indwelling where the Father, who is in Christ, is in the Church because Christ is in his Church. Paul builds his imperative that the Church is the Body of Christ upon the unifying and empowering work of the Spirit in the Church in 1 Cor 12. In Rom 8:11, he reveals that the believer's hope of resurrection comes from the indwelling of the same resurrecting Spirit indwelling Christ. Trinitarian theology is the relational distinction within unity, within community, that gives occasion for a Church, an *ekklesia*, that is truly the Body of Christ engaged in and embodying the same two-directional, dialogical space and purpose between God and culture that *Logos* occupies. This ontological and theological basis

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[252] Rahner, *Trinity*, 35.

[253] Paul goes as far in this unity as joining the Church to Christ in both his suffering and his glory.

validates a real, physical, and present "Christ-in-me" Church that joins grace and revelation as Paul notes in Gal 2:20 and Rahner's theology expresses. It is to this Christ-embodying *ekklesia* that focus now turns.

Ecclesiology and dialogue: An incarnational image

Christology and dialogue lead to a dialogical ecclesiology because the Church only exists by and through Christ. Incarnationally reimaging the Church restores the image of Christ in and through the Church. Ward follows Christology through various eras of Christian scholarship and finds, "Both relativism and universalism can be avoided by developing a Christology that takes time and embodiment seriously."[254] Ward's study is primarily Christological but from the introduction acknowledges "the effects of the Christic operation in the life of the Church into an engagement with the life of the world."[255] Bonhoeffer goes further stating that "the church is the present Christ, 'Christ existing as community.'"[256] Christ is present in the Church, in the relationships within the Church, and in the relationship of the Church and the culture. He is present in, and facilitator of, the dialogue. While Ward emphasizes Christ as the physical and spiritual mediator between God and humanity, Bonhoeffer emphasizes the Church, joined with Christ, as the present mediator between God and humanity. He does so in quite incarnational language saying, "Church is the presence of God in the world; truly in the world, truly a present

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[254] Ward, *Christ and Culture*, 176.

[255] Ward, *Christ and Culture*, 26.

[256] Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 111.

God."[257] Niebuhr, as quoted earlier, says there is no coming to know Christ absent the Church.[258] With picturesque language, C. S. Lewis describes what the Living Christ is doing in the believer as they are remade into "a different sort of thing; into a new little Christ, a being which, in its own small way, has the same kind of life as God."[259, 260] God is known through Christ. Christ is known through the Word and the Church in which he is present. This knowing is through witness, pointing, interpreting, and explaining of his words. It is then the dialogue of the Church that makes Christ, the mediator of the Father's revelation known within and without. Chan says, "The church's primary mission, then, is to be itself, which is to be 'Christ' for the world."[261]

If a Christology of dialogue informs an Ecclesiology of dialogue, then the Church, as the incarnate Body of Christ, stands in the same dual relationship with God and the world as Jesus. Jones and Butman find a relational understanding in both substantive (being) and functional (doing) aspects of the *imago Dei* as human relation to God extends to their capacity for relationship with other people.[262] The position and direction concept developed in the dialogical Christology gives the Church the same dual position of equally and simultaneously being prophet and intercessor. The Church is redeeming prophet when standing with God and reaching

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[257] Bonhoeffer, *Berlin*, 263.

[258] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 245. (full quote cited on page 33 above).

[259] C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 191-192.

[260] The previous section on Trinity addresses the distinction and unity of Father, Son and Spirt. In the same manner, the distinction and unity of the Church with the Trinity is maintained. To say that the Church has the same life as God is to both acknowledge the Church's unity with God in Christ as his body as well as maintaining the difference that the Church is not God but is sharing relationally in the life of God which can only be shared where there is a between and a distinction of those sharing.

[261] Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 40.

[262] Jones and Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies*, 65.

toward culture and redeemed intercessor when standing with culture and reaching toward God. In either direction, the Church is standing in Christ and embodying Christ because Christ, himself, occupies that between space and looks, speaks, sees, and hears in both directions. Garber considers it an imperative that, just as Christ became human, those committed "to live within the 'plausibility structure' of historic Christian orthodoxy…become a part of the lives of others."[263]

To embody Christ is to participate in the Trinity. Barnes says, "The Church only becomes properly alive when it gives voice to the Spirit that guides it."[264] A Pentecostal ecclesiology centers upon the *koinonia* of this diverse new community.[265] The *ekklesia* is assembled through the power and *koinonia* of the Spirit out of all nations and for all nations. Peter's reciting of Joel's prophecy retains the statements including young and old (Acts 2:17) and both sexes (Acts 2:17-18). In addition, the new Spirit-filled community includes both Jews and Jewish proselytes of many ethnicities and languages (Acts 2:8-11). Nearly every cultural barrier to unity is bridged by the unity of the Spirit in the Church. Vondey writes that a diverse *ekklesia* unified by *koinonia* remains in today's Pentecostalism as an ecumenical bridge and "a particular ecclesiological ethos."[266] He later says, "The heart of Pentecostal ecclesiality is perhaps closest to the idea of koinonia."[267] Karkainen finds this peculiarly global phenomenon

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[263] Garber, *Fabric of Faithfulness*, 173.

[264] Barnes, *Waiting on Grace*, 23.

[265] On *koinonia* within Pentecostal ecclesiology, see Veli-Matti Karkainen, "Pentecostal Ecclesiology - does it Exist?" *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 11, no. 4 (2011): 251-253.

[266] Wolfgang Vondey, "Pentecostals and Ecumenism: Becoming the Church as a Pursuit of Christian Unity," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 11, no. 4 (2011): 319-320.

[267] Vondey, "Pentecostals and Ecumenism," 327.

notable in saying, "Pentecostalism, unlike any other contemporary religious movement, Christian or non-Christian, is spread across most cultures, linguistic barriers, and social locations."[268] Considering the challenge of overcoming linguistic distance in cross-cultural communication, it is significant that the unity of today's culturally and linguistically diverse Pentecostal *ekklesia* originated with the Spirit's message being spoken and/or heard in multiple tongues. Unity of Christ and the Church is predicated by the unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit. A Trinitarian ecclesiology permeates a theology of dialogue which sees the Church as the Spirit-filled Body of Christ in the world and for all of the world.

To embody Christ is to participate in the *missio Dei*. That missional purpose is found by Barnes in "any honest and sincere dialogue, where people are genuinely seeking to overcome asymmetries of calls, gender, power, and race, has significance – and not just for the common good, broadly conceived, but as an expression of a missionary Church committed to the work of communicating truth and the building of relationships."[269] Dialogue and the participation of the Church in the *missio Dei* is covered in a previous section and recalled here to emphasize the incarnational and embodied nature of that mission as connected to the incarnated Christ in the Church. It is also to recognize the culturally located time and space of that incarnational mission.

In Christ, the kingdom of God is not only coming, it has come. Recalling Chan's perspective of modern eschatology, the Church embodies a similar now-and-not-yet position with "the presence of the future as the basis for social and political involvement. Christians are to be socially committed to this world because the world to come is already in some way

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[268] Karkainen, "Pentecostal Ecclesiology," 249.

[269] Barnes, *Waiting on Grace*, 23.

present."[270] Participation in the *missio Dei* is participation in the now-and-not-yet. In this way, providing clothes, food, and housing for the poor; pursuing justice; visiting prisoners; providing health and medical care; advocating for the vulnerable; providing emotional and mental health support is "part of the 'politics of Jesus,' which identifies us as the community belonging to him."[271] Keeping this mission in the tension of embodied spiritual politics, Mouw acknowledges, "No attempt to be civil will be biblically adequate if it downplays the reality of evil. Civility cannot mean relativism. All beliefs and values are not on moral par."[272] There is a mission of restoration because there is a divide. The divide remains when only its symptoms are addressed in human effort. Marshall's untangling of conflict and sin[273] seeks to differentiate the benign aspects of common life from the devastating and deadly realities in common human experience. Diagnosis is only the first step. Healing comes through an effective intervention. The *missio Dei* is God's address to sin's (separation's) root. Participation in the *missio Dei* brings the Kingdom of God.

To embody is to be rather than to perform. It is to be the *imago Dei*. *Missio Dei* emphasizes the lived-out Christ in the Church. *Imago Dei* emphasizes the nature and substance of the Christ incarnating Church. To embody is to be "what is said" by God and not just to "speak for" God. Just as Christ is message and messenger, so, too, the Church is what God is saying to the world. The Word in the world today is the Word in the Church. Garber summarizes

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[270] Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 186.

[271] Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 188.

[272] Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, 157.

[273] Marshall, *Christian Ethics*, 65.

Hauerwas' decades of writing on the "narrative nature of Christian social ethics, [with] his central contention that the church is, rather than has, a social ethic."[274] The Church's being in the world is the social economy of God's dialogue with humanity from which her manner of being emanates. Kelebogile T. Resane (Pentecostal) says, "Dialogue with a secular world is theologically based on the God–human relationship. God operates and reaches out to the world through humans – secular or religious. People who are carers of *imago Dei* are instruments in the hands of God."[275]

To the sin-separated world, God sent Jesus. He sent a Jesus who would be identified with and wounded by the sinful world. As Jesus Christ is God's dialogue, the Church, the Body of Christ, is God's continuing dialogue. As God's embodied dialogue with the culture, the Church can be said to be God's answer for the world. To the sin-separated world, God sends his Church. The answers are in the Answer, and that Answer is present for all humanity in, through, and as his Church. That Answer is accessible only to the degree that the Church is dialogically present for the culture in its conversations. Dialogical presence engages the issues of the culture in time, space, and relationships in real, tangible word; action; and interaction. God's Answer is accessible to the world only to the degree that the Church embodies Christ in the world and occupies the space between Christ and culture, time and eternity, dialogically with and for God to the world and with and for the world to God. The Church is God's incarnate image and through-word even if it is an imperfect image in its own eschatological tension. The Church may

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[274] Garber, *Fabric of Faithfulness*, 160.

[275] Kelebogile T. Resane, "Theology in Dialogue and Dialogue in Theology: Destroying the Walls of Hostility" *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 43, no. 1 (2022): 1-7.

be said to be an imperfect, or sin wounded, image of Christ, and, if so, that very humbling realization of solidarity with the world makes those wounds touchable to the world which, if invited, can touch and be touched by God through his vulnerable, compassionate, and redemptively incarnate Church. The world has its greatest access to God through the Church's identification or standing-with as touchable and equally sin wounded and yet fully redeemed and hope-filled source of healing. The Church stands, speaks, and listens in both directions. The Church crosses divides and brings *shalom* to the conflicts across worldviews. The Church relates and makes relationship with God possible through his own presence in the Church. The Church is the continuing mediations of God's communion with humanity and gives life, light, healing and restoration to the culture she engages. One the Church touches, touches God. One the Church hears, hears God listening. One speaks to God through his Church and God hears, knows, and is known by them. The Church is dialogue person to person to Person.[276]

A Beginning Theology of Dialogue

Scripture, theology, and Christian literature present Christian dialogue with culture as having divine origin and purpose. The following Theology of Dialogue seeks to bring the key elements from the literature studied above into a consolidated and applicable form. This theology is considered to be beginning rather than fully developed as there is certainly much more that can

[276] It bears repeating at this juncture that the Trinity is the model of distinction-in-unity and that it is into this relational community of the triune God that the Church is born through Christ, according to John 17. The Church is not God. God is God. At the same time, there is no Church absent God. If Christ is not *in* the Church, it is not the Church. Mutual indwelling is the ontological essence of the Church as much as it is of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Only in this understanding can the Church truly be "one" with Christ and the Spirit-filled witnesses of Acts 1:8 who bring others to the Christ who brings the Church into fellowship with the Father.

be explored and said regarding the dialogue of God with humanity and the Church with the culture. The essentially theological statements that follow are intended to be concise, connected, and consecutive, although that goal has its challenges.

Before its beneficial nature, both natural and spiritual, dialogue has a nature grounded in its God-ordained intention and initiation. Christ was before the world was. He is the breathed-out Word-of-God (*Logos*) at creation, in Scripture, in flesh, and in his Church. His mission in the world on behalf of humanity was before the world was. The Church was not until it was by his Word. The Church is not except it is by his Word. There is something of the *imago Dei* in every human. There is also something of the *imago Dei* that is not until it is in faith response to revelation (dialogue). Jesus is that revelation. Once the dialogue of God (Christ) is responded to in faith (loving God), the believer then unites with God in dialogue with the rest of humanity (loving neighbor). Christ is the first dialogue of God with humanity and he is the living, loving Through-Word-of-Life. As initial Word and initiating Word, he becomes Through-Word by being the first to enter the "world" of the other as God's invitation to communion.

To live out God's mission as the Church in dialogue with culture is to live out of the new nature and being that is in Christ. This new nature is a love-compelled and Spirit-empowered nature. To live in this way is to live and speak "for your sake."[277] Out of the abundance of this Christ nature, the dialogue of life overflows. It overflows from God to the culture and for its benefit. It overflows in and as the Church. Barnes says it this way: "The first Christian theology is a theology of dialogue – missional and prophetic."[278] God's designed and designated role for

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[277] See Phil 1:21-26.

[278] Barnes, *Waiting on Grace*, 194.

the Church is described as salt and light. It is a role occupied by a Church simultaneously brought out of, remaining in, and being kept from the world. It is a Church existing by God's love for the world and for those who will believe. As God is a God of dialogue, speaking both within himself and with humanity, so humans, made in his image, are beings of dialogue, with him, within the Church, and with the world. The purpose of the Church is found in the nature of the Church and God's intentions for the world through the Church (*missio Dei*).

Words matter and words make a difference because they are a powerful, living, and active substance of dialogue and spirit interactions. They are creative and life-giving after the manner of the Creator who first breathed them. Whether giving life to good or evil, they create.[279] Their highest function is found when they are aligned with the Divine nature. When proceeding from God or the Divine nature (truth, love, revelation), they are the mediation (dialogue) of loving relationship intending the good of the other. Christian dialogue with the culture is loving neighbor. Loving dialogue leads to life. Christian dialogue has potential to benefit the culture in real, practical ways for even the most challenging cultural issues.

The benefit of Christian dialogue is a redemptive benefit. Redemption affects the natural/temporal life and relationships as well as the spiritual/eternal. Leading the culture to truth, leads it to life, to love, to peace, and ultimately to God in Christ. The Church not only can intervene, but must intervene by its nature if it is the Body of Christ. The Church intervenes

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[279] To use "life" to describe the realization of evil effects is to use it differently than its fuller meaning in describing the realization of the effects of Divine Revelation. Divine life may be said to be life that is true life. See John 10:10 and 1 Tim 6:19. In the same manner, to use "create" to describe human activities is to use it as a subjective and not a sovereign capacity. The creative capacity of human words is subject to the will of the Sovereign Creator as humans are created creators and not First Creator. Human creativity exists within the boundaries of the One without limitation. God, alone, creates from nothing other than his own essence and will. All else exists at his pleasure and subsists within his will. While existence, sovereignty, and subjectivity are more than this project can develop, these are introduced to recognize the theological framework which supports dialogue, words, and human relation as existing from God's own creative essence and Word as this project proposes.

where it is a mediating essence and sacrificial presence. The Church cannot remain in love and withhold grace and truth any more than it can remain in Christ and withhold Christ. Neither can it remain in truth absent love. Where the Church is, there is Christ, or it is not the Church that is present. God, incarnate in Christ, is incarnate as the Church in the culture.

The human purpose (*telos*) is relationship with God. Separation of that relationship severed the dialogue. Separation is corrected through restored relationship and relationship through restoration of dialogue. Jesus Christ as *Logos* and mediator (dialogue) is the way, means, and manner of that restoration. The *Logos* is a Divine, touchable (graspable), in-flesh Word. In Christ, God touches and speaks, hears and is touched. Christ is the mediator of reciprocal relationship with God.

Words created, and words have destroyed. The division and conflict in relationships evidenced in damaging, destructive words are restored through healing words. The words of death are addressed by the Word and words of Life. The Word is Christ. The Word is in and through Christ. That life-giving Word is in the Church. The Church now gives life as mediator (dialogue) of the Word to the world. Just as the Church received life through the *Logos*, it now speaks that same life-giving *Logos* in and for the culture. Life, love, and truth are lacking in the issues that divide and destroy human relations and dialogue. Because grace and truth fill Christ who fills the Church, the Church does not "have the answers" as much as the Church "is God's answer." To the love-and-life-craving world, God graciously and incarnationally sends the Church to cross the sin-filled divisions and bring life-giving restoration.

The purpose of dialogue is the loving revelation-response relationship of the divine purpose preceding and present in creation and currently expressed in a now-and-not-yet eschatological tension. This space is an occupied space filled with the Christ-embodying,

redemptive dialogue of God with humanity called the Church. To dialogue with culture is to be incarnationally present in the dialogues of the culture as the image and embodiment of the redeeming Christ. Embodied dialogue of God with culture is a touchable embodiment made possible by the Church's identification with the world as Christ himself identified with sinful humanity. This identity is an embodied and dialogical identity as in-not-of and exists in a now-not-yet tension enabling it to stand both with and between and look in both directions – with Christ to the world, and with the world to Christ. In this interactive relationship, the Church is continually altered as she listens and speaks, touches and is touched by God in Christ and by the culture into which and for whose benefit she gives herself. Stated more concisely, in the dialogue of the Church with the world, God gives himself again and again.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored the biblical, theological, and literary support for a theology of dialogue. It has found that Jesus, God in a culturally located man, engaged culture, theology, relationships, human need, and more in his dialogues. His words came from a heart of love and recognition of the power of his words to give life. Peter acknowledged his power saying those words give eternal life (John 6:68). Jesus is both message and messenger. As Word-Made-Flesh, he is both what God is saying and how he says it. Jesus's prayer to the Father of John 17 identifies the situation of the Church as intentionally present in a culture in which they are simultaneously member and alien. The love of God in Christ is the same love in the Church that compels her to serve the benefit of the culture and engage the dialogues that lead to the ultimate transformation, life from death through restored communion with God.

The literature found that the Church has approached this loving, Christ-incarnating engagement with culture differently across eras and cultures. The aim has been to contextualize a love-compelled dialogue that is both spiritually and practically focused. Both eternal and earthly welfare and relationships matter and shape the full arena of Christian cultural engagement. The Church's engagement is simultaneously for the culture and for God as God is loved through loving dialogue and actions within and for the culture (Matt 25:31-46, 1 John 4:20-21). Union with God in Christ places the Word-of-Truth in the Church and through the Church lights the way for the world to know life that is true life (John 1:9, 1 John 5:20). Christian cultural engagement is the dialogue of God with humanity and participation in his purpose and mission.

The theology of dialogue developed from the biblical and theological literature review in this chapter joins the Church to God in Christ and Christ to the world in the Church where the Church is an incarnational imaging of Christ in culture. This literature study supports the potential for a theology of dialogue that may indeed address brokenness in USAmerican dialogue.

Having developed a theology of dialogue robust enough for the Church to address the roots of human division and divisive dialogue through re-imaging Christ in the culture, the questions become: (1) "How can this theology of dialogue be presented to a local church?" and (2) "Can that presentation impact a local church's incarnational ministry and presence in the culture?" The context of study for answering these questions is Calvary Church, the multi-national, multi-cultural local church in Naperville, Illinois described in chapter one. The remaining chapters present the methodology and results of that study and evaluate those results in light of the theology developed and opportunities for future efforts.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROJECT NARRATIVE AND FIELD WORK

Introduction

Ministry and discipleship are the two words from the project title that remain to be addressed. The substance of these words is certainly present throughout the project, but they have not been focused upon by name. This chapter addresses these concepts through the conducted field work and social science research. Chapter one identified a problem in USAmerican cultural dialogue and a local church context (Calvary Church, Naperville) in which an intervention may be introduced to address that problem. Chapter two established a theology of dialogue robust enough to address the problem. Attention now turns to the practical ministry application and question: Does presenting Christ as God's dialogue with humanity enable a local church (Calvary) to shift their perspective and alignment of themselves and Christ in them (reimage) to engage and be (incarnate) God's dialogue with culture? The process of aligning one's seeing and one's being with the Word of God in Christ is the most elemental form of discipleship. To "reimage" is to see differently to be differently. The field work undertaken attempted to study this ministry application at Calvary Church by seeking to advance incarnational discipleship of the participants through a Calvary Master Class presentation.[1]

[1] The purpose of Calvary Master Classes was briefly discussed in chapter one. These classes are single topic, standalone events comprised of between one and four sessions in either a one or two-day event. These classes bring qualified Christian theologians and educators to address topics such as "How to Read the Bible," "How to Read Revelation," etc. The goal of the classes is to support the mission of Calvary through increasing mastery of biblical and theological thinking and behaving (discipleship) of Calvary Church participants.

Methodology

Quantitative research addressed the presentation's effectiveness and was the portion of the project most related to answering the research question. It was a joint practical theology and social science research project in "mutual critical correlation…[that] seeks to bring together an interpretation of the religious experience and the contemporary situation in a way that enables both to engage in critical and potentially transformative dialogue."[2]

Additionally, biblical, theological, and literary studies factored into this practical, ministry-focused project as the project queried the biblical passages and theological literature most likely to contain evidence for, or contribute to, a broader theology of dialogue. The biblical study did not focus on statistical data, such as how often dialogue is mentioned in the New Testament, but on the nature and purpose of dialogue and how gaining understanding of that nature and purpose might impact participants' perspectives and behaviors. Study of the conversations Jesus had in Scripture was, in essence, a limited qualitative study of social interactions of Christ and other people from which emerged elements of healthy dialogue for the theology of dialogue presentation. These qualitative portions of the overall project were preliminary to the quantitative study and will be further discussed in chapter five where the project as a whole is evaluated.

The theology and manner of Christ-embodying dialogue derived from the biblical and theological study were presented to Calvary Church in a Master Class on June 23, 2023 titled

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[2] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research,* 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 2016), 69.

"How to Engage a Divided Culture."[3] The overall project also fit the description of action research in that the desired outcome was change in behavior by helping "people to analyze their situation, consider findings, plan to keep what they want, and change what they do not like…[and] enable people to examine several courses of action and the probable results or consequences of each option."[4] Key components of the theology of dialogue in the presentation were designed to shift participants perceptions. The intention was for participants to see Christ differently, see dialogue differently, and see themselves, as part of the dialogical and missional Church, differently.

The basis of the theology of dialogue presented was seeing dialogue as a human phenomenon originating within Godself. God spoke and in response creation came into being. Words, therefore, are powerful, creative components of dialogue but dialogue encompasses much more than words. Words can also be destructive as dialogue with God and others was severed by sin and God's answer to that separation was to send Jesus, the Word of Creation and two-directional through-word, into the world for its restoration. For the Church to be God's dialogue with culture is to be incarnationally (physically) and missionally (purposefully) present in the dialogues of the culture as the image and embodiment of the redeeming Christ. Embodied dialogue is touchable and made possible by the Church's identification with the world as Christ himself identified with sinful humanity. This identification as in-not-of exists within a now-not-

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[3] The Calvary Master Class was a lecture style presentation with table discussions in recognition of scholarship regarding effective teaching. Lecture style presentation has been called the predominant model of the last millennium by the authors of a 2014 study that also acknowledged the more recent studies endorsing interactive methods. Scott Freeman et al., "Active Learning Increases Student Performance in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 111, no. 23, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.131903011.

[4] Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 42.

yet tension enabling it to stand both with and between and to look in both directions – with Christ to the world, and with the world to Christ. Dialogue is a revelation and response phenomenon in which the Church is continually altered as she listens and speaks, touches and is touched by God in Christ and by the culture into which and for whose benefit she gives herself incarnationally, lovingly, and purposefully. These components of the theology of dialogue were presented to see Christ as God's seeing, hearing, and touchable dialogue of healing and restoration present in the Church as God's continued dialogue with culture. The remainder of this chapter on research methodology pertains to the quantitative study of the Calvary Master Class participants' perceptions that yielded the data presented in chapter four.

Bias avoidance, statistical significance of findings, and integrity of the research instrument were addressed by use of a third-party statistician and methodologist, Dr. Thomas Gollery. Much of the description of the statistical and mathematical elements that follows in this chapter and chapter four was either provided or directed by the methodologist to align the methodology and results for critical evaluation while addressing the potential for bias, manipulation, or misrepresentation of data and/or its significance.

A pre-experimental, quantitative research design was used to address the study's topic and research problem.[5] The specific research methodology was a post-survey given after the Calvary Master Class to evaluate participants' perceptions of the presentation's impact. Survey research was selected for its advantage of generating considerable amounts of data on a given research topic, its flexibility, scalability, and its ability to generate considerable statistical power

[5] Paul Leedy, Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, and Laura Ruth Johnson, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 12th ed. (New York, NY: Pearson, 2019), 200-201.

for significance testing purposes.[6] Surveys are also valued for their potential efficacy in assuring respondent anonymity to promote the possibility of more candid responses to survey items. As the study focused upon participants' perceptions, promoting candor was necessary to achieve reliable responses.

Sample/Sample Selection

The research used a non-probability and purposive sampling technique.[7] Of the 130 people present for the Calvary Master Class, 77 participated in the survey. A survey participant was defined as anyone answering at least one question beyond the first question.[8] As the majority of the attenders participated, and as the presentation was promoted and open to all Calvary Church attenders and email subscribers, the participants were considered representative of the general constituents of Calvary Church in every demographic, including but not limited to race, nationality, gender, education level, and socio-economic status. Only adults 18 years old and above were allowed to participate in the survey primarily due to the additional requirements and protections generally necessary when minors are included. Calvary Church is a multi-national, multi-ethnic, and socio-economically diverse population as described in chapter one. The attenders (and, therefore, the participants as well) were also deemed representative of the general population of Calvary Church in the subjective observation of the researcher making the

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[6] Thomas Jones, Mark Baxter, and Vikas Khanduja, "A Quick Guide to Survey Research," in *Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England*, 95, (2013): 5-7.

[7] Jack R. Fraenkel, Norman E. Wallen, and Helen H. Hyun, *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education*, 10th ed., International student ed. (New York, NY: McGraw Hill Education, 2019).

[8] Question one was the two-part acknowledgment of (1) adult status allowing participation and (2) consent to participate allowing the anonymous, scientific use of the survey responses for academic purposes. A "no" to this question (either not an adult or not consenting to participate) terminated the survey for that respondent.

presentation, with the one exception being that the audience was perceived to be almost entirely adults. The age of those adults, however, was observed to be representative of the variety of ages from young adults to senior adults present at regular Sunday services and other general ministry events at Calvary Church. Participation was completely voluntary, uncompensated, and anonymous.

Statistical Power Analysis (a priori)

An a priori statistical power analysis using G*Power software (3.1.9.2, Universität Düsseldorf, Germany) provided the sample size parameters necessary to detect statistically significant effect in responses to the proposed overarching research question. The statistical power analysis was delimited to a power $(1 - \beta)$ of .80, foreseen response effects of medium and large, and a probability of $p = .05$. The one sample *t*-test was used in research questions one through three, and as such, required a sample of 27 for an anticipated medium effect for response ($d = .50$), and 12 for an anticipated large effect for response ($d = .80$).

Research Instrumentation

The research instrument was researcher created in the absence of an existing, standardized instrument appropriate for addressing the proposed research design. As a result, instrument validation procedures were conducted to ensure an optimum level of validity in the data produced by the research instrument and for subsequent credibility of study findings.[9]

[9] Godfred O. Boateng et al., "Best Practices for Developing and Validating Scales for Health, Social, and Behavioral Research: A Primer," *Frontiers in Public Health* 6, no. 149 (2018): 14. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2018.00149.

The research instrument validation process was conducted in three distinct phases. The a priori phase of establishing the survey instrument's content validity was addressed through content analysis of the existing literature on the study's topic to establish the prominent themes associated with the study's topic and overarching construct. The prominent themes were then placed into categories that became the foundation for the survey items to be featured on the research instrument.

The second phase of the instrument validation process involved a formal piloting of the study's subsequent research instrument, a Likert-type survey instrument represented through a 5-point scale approach. The closed question approach offered greater potential for the chosen quantitative study approach and more feasible data handling for the sample size than open-ended questions or other methodologies. Dillman et al. noted that the most common format used today represents responses using the five categories: strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, and strongly disagree.[10] Such named categories are user-friendly and provide acceptable levels of reliability.

Internal reliability of study participant response to the pilot survey administration was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α).[11] Cronbach's alpha is ideally suited for use with scale-level data comprised of multiple response sets.[12] An alpha level of $\alpha = .60$ to .70 was considered as

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[10] Don A. Dillman, Jolene D. Smyth, and Leah Melani Christian, *Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*, 4th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2014), 159.

[11] Boateng et al., "Best Practices." 13.

[12] Andy Field, *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics: North American Edition*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2018), 1386.

adequate with levels of $\alpha = .80$ and .90 considered "very good" to "excellent."[13] The third phase (posteriori) of research instrument validation was addressed using Cronbach's alpha (α).

Study Procedures

Proposed query items were first submitted to the methodologist for expert evaluation and adjustment to ensure statistical potential and evaluation of internal reliability. The particular questions (listed in chapter four) were designed to closely represent the major components of the presentation (construct) to test the impact of that intervention (presentation) upon the participants' perceptions. Some of the questions were derived from and improved upon the previous general Calvary survey that was part of the rationale for the project identified in chapter one that found problems in the lack of theological understanding of current cultural issues and the lack of healthy dialogue between people of differing views. The two categories of theological questions were related to (1) the theological nature of cultural issues and (2) the foundational components of the theology of dialogue, especially its Christology. The instrument was adjusted by the researcher to reduce potential items to fewer questions and focus upon the ones most likely to be influenced by the construct (presentation). Once developed and approved by the methodologist, the full survey instrument was submitted to the Southeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the safety of human subjects in the research. The IRB application was approved June 13, 2023.[14] The survey questions were then entered into an

[13] Field, *Discovering Statistics*, 1387.
[14] Appendix A.

anonymous, online, SurveyMonkey™ form that generated a digital QR code (quick response code) for online (smartphone) access.[15]

The session was presented Friday, June 23, 2023 from 6:30-8:15pm at Calvary Church. Following the presentation, the survey QR code was made available to participants as the final slide of the presentation and the survey was open the night of the presentation only. The online form was closed to new entries approximately two hours after the class ended. On June 24, 2023, the raw data were exported from the online service to a spreadsheet file and submitted directly to the methodologist for analysis.

Data Analysis

Evaluations of missing data, initial response data to survey items on the research instrument, and essential demographic identifying information were specifically addressed. Missing data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Specifically, frequency counts (*n*) and percentages (%) were utilized. The randomness of missing data was assessed using Little's MCAR (missing completely at random) test statistic.[16] An MCAR value of $p > .05$ was considered indicative of sufficient randomness of missing data in the essential response set. Missing data at or below 5% was considered inconsequential for subsequent analytics.[17]

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[15] www.surveymonkey.com. SurveyMonkey brand, copyright © 1999-2023 SurveyMonkey, is used according to stated permissions for academic purposes. See https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/brandassets/.

[16] Cheng Li, "Little's Test of Missing Completely at Random," *Stata Journal* 13, no. 4 (2013): 795-809, 797-798.

[17] See Joseph Shafer and John Graham, "Missing Data: Our View of the State of the Art," *Psychological Methods* 7, no. 2 (2002): 147-177.

The study's essential demographic information was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Specifically, frequency counts (*n*) and percentages (%) represented the primary descriptive statistical techniques utilized for illustrative and comparative purposes. The overarching research question was addressed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency counts (*n*), measures of central tendency (mean scores) and variability (standard deviations; minimums/maximums), standard errors of the mean, and measures of data normality (skewness; kurtosis) represented the primary descriptive statistical techniques used in addressing the study's research question.

The statistical significance of findings of the overarching research question was addressed using the one sample *t*-test.[18] Although the *t*-test is notoriously robust against violations of the assumption of normality,[19] the assumption of normality of data was evaluated through inspection of respective skew and kurtosis values. Skew and kurtosis values were interpreted using the threshold parameters of normality offered by Joseph F. Hair, Jr. et al.[20] and George and Mallery.[21] Skew values not exceeding -2.0/+2.0 and kurtosis values not exceeding -7.0/+7.0 were considered indicative of data that were relatively normally distributed. The alpha level of $p < .05$ represented the threshold for statistical significance of finding. Cohen's *d* was

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[18] Banda Gerald, "A Brief Review of Independent, Dependent and One Sample T-Test," *International Journal of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics* 4, no. 2 (2018): 50–50. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijamtp.20180402.13.

[19] Field, *Discovering Statistics*, 412-425.

[20] Joseph F. Hair, Jr. et al., *Multivariate Data Analysis: A Global Perspective*, 7th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2010).

[21] D. George and P. Mallery, *IBM SPSS 26 Statistics Step by Step: A simple guide and reference*, 16th ed. (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2020).

used to assess the magnitude of effect (effect size). Sawilowsky's parameters of interpretation of effect sizes were employed for comparative purposes.[22]

The analysis of study data was conducted using the 29th version of IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Narrative Description of Project Execution

The substance of this study was a response to the perception of brokenness in USAmerican cultural dialogue. Chapter one gave the initial research to determine if there was evidence for that perception of dialogue from religious, non-religious, scientific, and popular sources deemed sufficiently representative of the broader culture and found that the perception could indeed be substantiated.[23] The introductory chapter also referenced the findings of a preliminary Calvary Church survey[24] that identified a lack of theological understanding of current cultural issues as well as lack of open, respectful, and exploratory dialogue between people of differing views. Combined, the cultural evidence of broken dialogue and the Calvary preliminary survey gave the problem and context in which to study the incarnational discipleship-oriented intervention.

The intervention was a presentation of a theological perspective of the problem and potential solution through development of a theology of dialogue derived from the biblical,

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[22] Shlomo S. Sawilowsky, "New effect size rules of thumb," *Journal of Modern Applied Statistical Methods* 8, no. 2 (2009): 597-599.

[23] While the study was academically limited to perceptions, polarization, vilification, and even violence were considered indicative of a real relational and communication breakdown beyond perception. Although the study did not verify whether that breakdown was increasing, static, or in decline, it could identify it as present.

[24] Sloan, "A Survey of Calvary Church Theological and Cultural Engagement," 24.

theological, and historical literature review. Data relating to the problem (identified in chapter one) were presented in the session. The historical review that was presented, while not comprehensive, looked at Christian approaches from multiple eras and multiple theological perspectives. The biblical review covered passages related to intentional dialogue in general and the conversations of Jesus in particular. The literature review and Scripture review were combined to discover a potential theology of dialogue applicable to the modern context. The theology of dialogue emerging from that study formed the content of a Master Class presented to Calvary Church on June 23, 2023, which 130 adults generally representative of Calvary's congregation attended. The presentation at Calvary Church and the subsequent post-survey were the primary context of the quantitative research.

Chapter Summary

Action research of a correlated practical theology and social science study was conducted in the presentation of a Calvary Master Class, "How to Engage a Divided Culture," to 130 attendees at Calvary Church to test whether presentation of a theology of dialogue could alter perceptions and behavior affecting incarnational discipleship. The primary methodology addressing the overarching research question was a quantitative study of participants' perceptions using a researcher-created survey instrument assisted and analyzed by a third-party methodologist and statistician. The parameters and tools of the study were presented in this chapter and the resulting data and significance is presented in chapter four. Qualitative elements of the overall project discussed in chapters one and two will be included in the evaluation in chapter five, which ties the study together and suggests implications and possibilities for the future.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT RESULTS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Introduction

Data and results of the quantitative research described in chapter three are the subject of this chapter. Bias avoidance was a primary concern for the study, which relied upon candid responses of participants' perceptions. Effective development of the research instrument (survey) and accurate interpretation of the quantitative data were additional concerns mitigated by use of a third-party methodologist as described in the previous chapter. The results presented in this chapter were the product of analysis conducted by the methodologist and statistician Dr. Thomas Gollery, using the 29th version of IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The researcher submitted the raw data to the methodologist and was not involved in the processing, digital analysis, or presentation of the results; therefore, there was no researcher manipulation or alteration to benefit a particular evaluative finding in any direction.[1] What follows are the results of the quantitative study as processed and presented by the expert methodologist.

Evaluation of Survey Results

A quantitative, pre-experimental research design featuring a survey research methodology was used to address the study's topic (cultural dialogue) and research problem: Can a theology of dialogue reimage a local church's incarnational presence and engagement with the culture?

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[1] Addition of the chapter introduction and minor grammatical and language changes for flow, along with minor re-formatting adjustments to adhere to Turabian, 9th edition, were made only where they benefitted readability or academic requirements and did not alter content, data, or implications.

Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyze the survey data. The following represents the reporting of findings achieved in the study.

Foundational descriptive statistical findings

Descriptive statistical techniques were used to evaluate study data at a preliminary, foundational level. The following represents the reporting of descriptive statistical study findings at the preliminary, foundational level.

Demographic information

Two demographic identifier variables were featured in the study: frequency of church attendance and length of time attending Calvary Church. Descriptive statistical techniques were used to analyze the study's demographic identifying information.

Table 1 contains a summary of finding for the descriptive statistical evaluation of the study's demographic variables of church attendance and Calvary Church attendance using frequencies (*n*) and percentages (*%*).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics summary table: Demographic variables

Variable	*n*	%	Cumulative %
Church Attendance			
Weekly Basis	68	97.14	97.14
Monthly Basis	1	1.43	98.57
Special Occasions	1	1.43	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	100.00
Calvary Church Attendance			
1 Year or Less	10	14.29	14.29
2 to 5 Years	16	22.86	37.14
6 to 10 Years	9	12.86	50.00
Over 10 Years	34	48.57	98.57
Never	1	1.43	100.00

Descriptive statistics: Survey item response set by dialogue element

Descriptive statistical techniques were utilized to assess the study's response set data within the overarching construct identified for study purposes. The study's response data were specifically addressed using the descriptive statistical techniques of frequencies (*n*), measures of typicality (mean scores), variability (minimum/maximum; standard deviations), standard errors of the mean (SE_M), and data normality (skew; kurtosis).

Table 2 contains a summary of finding for the descriptive statistical analysis of the study's response set data associated with the study's overarching construct.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics summary table: Study participant mean response by survey item represented on the research instrument

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*n*	SE_M	Min	Max	Skew	Kurtosis
Item #1	4.57	0.71	70	0.09	1.00	5.00	-2.30	7.47
Item #2	4.43	0.94	70	0.11	1.00	5.00	-2.00	3.89
Item #3	4.41	0.84	70	0.10	1.00	5.00	-1.78	3.57
Item #4	4.44	0.91	70	0.11	1.00	5.00	-1.80	2.85
Item #5	4.63	0.71	70	0.08	1.00	5.00	-2.58	8.75
Item #6	4.63	0.76	70	0.09	1.00	5.00	-3.18	12.07
Item #7	4.67	0.65	70	0.08	1.00	5.00	-3.01	12.63
Item #8	4.80	0.58	70	0.07	1.00	5.00	-4.46	24.66
Item #9	4.76	0.60	70	0.07	1.00	5.00	-3.90	20.05
Item #10	4.67	0.72	70	0.09	1.00	5.00	-3.00	10.59
Item #11	4.56	0.71	70	0.09	1.00	5.00	-2.24	7.21
Item #12	3.60	1.00	70	0.12	2.00	5.00	-0.37	-0.93
Item #13	4.41	0.63	70	0.07	3.00	5.00	-0.57	-0.60

Internal reliability

The internal reliability of study participant response to survey items associated with the study's construct of dialogue was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (α) statistical technique. As a result, using the conventions of alpha interpretation proposed by George and Mallery,[2] the internal reliability level achieved in the study across all 13 survey items represented on the research instrument was considered "excellent" at $\alpha = .92$.[3]

[2] George and Mallery, *IBM SPSS Step by Step*.

[3] Field, *Discovering Statistics*. 1387.

The following table contains a summary of findings for the evaluation of internal reliability of study participant response to the 13 survey items represented on the research instrument.

Table 3. Internal reliability summary table

Scale	# of Items	α	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Dialogue	13	.92	.89	.94

Note. The lower and upper bounds of Cronbach's α were calculated using a 95.00% confidence interval.

Findings by Research Question

One overarching research question was posed to address the study's purpose. The probability level of $p < .05$ was adopted to represent the threshold value for findings considered as statistically significant. Effect sizes were evaluated by applying the conventions offered by Sawilowsky.[4] The following represents the formal reporting of finding for the study's overarching research question.

Overarching research question

Each element of the study's construct was specifically addressed for statistical significance testing purposes using the one sample *t*-test.[5] The magnitude of effect of study participant response within each element of the study's construct was addressed using Cohen's *d* statistical technique. As a result, all 13 survey items reflected statistically significant response effects.

[4] Sawilowsky, "New Effect Sizes," 597-599.

[5] Banda, "Brief Review."

Nearly 70% (69.2%; $n = 9$) of the study's survey items reflected huge magnitude effects, with 23.1% ($n = 3$) reflecting very large magnitudes of response effects. The single greatest response effect was reflected in study participant response to "Through Christ, God is not only seen and heard, but also sees and hears" at $d = 3.10$, followed by "God not only touches, but is touched through dialogue" at $d = 2.93$. The survey item reflecting the least degree of response effect was "I have open, respectful conversations on a regular basis with people who hold differing views of current cultural issues" at $d = .60$.

Table 4 contains a summary of finding for study participant response effects for the 13 elements identified for study purposes.

Table 4. Summary table: Comparison of survey item response effects by survey item represented on the research instrument

Survey Item	*Mean*	*t*	*d*
Issues dividing the culture have theological roots.	4.57	18.42***	2.20[a]
GENDER and IDENTITY issues are impacted by how people view God	4.43	12.70***	1.52[b]
ECONOMIC issues are impacted by how people view God	4.41	14.04***	1.68[b]
RACE AND JUSTICE issues are impacted by how people view God	4.44	13.25***	1.58[b]
Dialogue benefits even the most challenging cultural issues	4.63	19.31***	2.31[a]
Breakdown of dialogue with God prevents humans from flourishing	4.63	17.82***	2.13[a]
Christ is God's LOGOS or restored dialogue (two-way communication) with humanity	4.67	21.41***	2.56[a]
Through Christ, God is not only seen and heard, but also sees and hears	4.80	25.97***	3.10[a]
God not only touches, but is touched through dialogue	4.76	24.49***	2.93[a]
The Church is the Body of Christ – literally Christ embodied in the current culture.	4.67	19.51***	2.33[a]
The Church does not have the answers so much as she IS God's answer.	4.56	18.22***	2.18[a]
I have open, respectful conversations on a regular basis with people who hold differing views of current cultural issues	3.60	5.03***	.60
After experiencing this presentation, I feel more confident to purposefully engage potentially divisive conversations.	4.41	18.92***	2.26[a]

***$p < .001$ [a] Huge Effect ($d \geq 2.0$) [b] Very Large Effect ($d \geq 1.20$)

Results Summary

The study data and statistical significance of the results were presented in this chapter. Most study participants (97.1%; $n = 68$) indicated that they attended church on a weekly basis. Nearly half (48.6%; $n = 34$) of study participants indicated that they had attended Calvary Church for over 10 years. An excellent level of internal reliability for study participant response to survey items represented on the research instrument was achieved in the study, validating the instrument's use in the study. Statistically significant response effects were reflected for all 13 survey items represented on the study's research instrument. Very large to huge magnitudes of response effects were reflected in 92.3% ($n = 12$) of the study's survey items. The greatest degree of response effect was reflected in study participant response to "Through Christ, God is not only seen and heard, but also sees and hears" at $d = 3.10$. The least degree of response effect was reflected in the survey item "I have open, respectful conversations on a regular basis with people who hold differing views of current cultural issues" at $d = .60$.

Results Interpretation

The research question presented in chapter one asked: Can a theology of dialogue reimage a local church's incarnational presence and engagement with the culture? Participants' perceptions were indeed found to be impacted by the intervention construct of a presentation of the theology of dialogue to Calvary Church tested by the Likert-scale post-survey instrument. The ability to "reimage" Calvary participants' dialogical view of Christ for incarnational discipleship and ministry found in the results of this study answered the research question in the affirmative: Yes! A theology of dialogue can reimage a local church's incarnational presence and engagement with the culture.

The data above showed that the two highest magnitudes of effect were related to two of the most consequential elements of the theology of dialogue, the two-way hearing of the incarnated Christ and the two-way touching of the incarnated Christ. The third highest effect of a theological element at $d = 2.56$ demonstrated the impact of the presentation on the participants' seeing that Christ is God's *Logos* or restored dialogue (two-way communication) with humanity.

The lowest magnitude of effect was related to the question regarding how often participants were already engaging in purposeful dialogue. This finding additionally validated the study in that it was consistent with the findings of the previous survey forming the rationale for the intervention. In other words, the participants in the Calvary Master Class post-survey similarly represented their current level of incarnational dialogue as the respondents to the 2021 general Calvary survey. The presentation was shown by the data results of the immediate post-presentation survey to have impacted the theological perceptions of dialogue but not yet to have altered behaviors or the degree to which those dialogues were already taking place. This finding was expected as sufficient time for behavioral change had not passed between the presentation and the immediate survey. This finding was also hopeful in that opportunity remains to impact dialogical engagement and the change in perception which precedes change in behavior had been demonstrated. The participants themselves agreed with this optimism as another of the questions demonstrating a huge magnitude of effect ($d = 2.26$) was agreement with the statement: After experiencing this presentation, I feel more confident to purposefully engage potentially divisive conversations. Optimism regarding the future potential of the theology of dialogue was provided as, in the participants' perceptions, the presentation impacted both the participants' Christological view of dialogue and confidence in purposeful (missional) engagement in dialogue (discipleship and ministry).

Chapter Summary

Results of the research instrument validation and reliability testing, descriptive statistical techniques, and summaries of findings were presented in this chapter. Brief interpretation of the results found them to have answered the research question in the affirmative. The presentation of a theology of dialogue indeed impacted perceptions of the participants. The findings presented in this chapter and general conclusions related to the full study are further evaluated for meaning, potential implications, limitations, and opportunities for future studies in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, EVALUATION, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction

Findings require interpretation. The evaluation of what was learned and the potential meaning learnings might have for the faith and practice of the Body of Christ are the subject of this chapter. A theology of dialogue was studied, developed, presented to a local church, and tested to determine whether that presentation impacted the perceptions of the participants. The concluding question is: "What difference does it make?"

"God speaks" were the opening words of this project dissertation. Dialogue is such an elemental presupposition of human experience that its source in the *imago Dei* may be overlooked absent theological attention. This project sought to attend to the nature, purpose, and power of dialogue to impact health in human experience toward either wholeness or brokenness. An opportunity to lead USAmerican society and Calvary Church to healthier dialogue through Christian engagement with culture initiated this study in chapter one. That opportunity was presented as evidenced by the current polarized and vehement nature of social dialogue in the views of writers from multiple religious and non-religious perspectives. Chapter two developed a theology of dialogue robust enough to address the social problem and offer the hope of a way to cultural healing and wholeness by reimaging Christ in and through the Church. The product of chapters one and two was the research question: Can presenting a theology of dialogue reimage a local church's incarnational presence and engagement with the culture? The approach to testing the research question in a local context was described in chapter three, and the results were presented in chapter four. From the literature study of chapter two and the research results of

chapter four, conclusions, implications, limitations, and opportunities for future studies are presented in this culminating chapter.

Goals Assessed

The short answer to the research question was "Yes!" Presenting a theology of dialogue can reimage a local church's incarnational presence and engagement with the culture. The study provided sufficient data to arrive at a conclusion and in so doing (offering a conclusion in either the affirmative or the negative) was considered a successful study. The study was limited to what could be measured in the timeframe available with the chosen methodology. As such, the focus was upon the perceptions of the participants. To say the study was successful in "reimaging" is to say that it did, indeed, provide the participants a new image of what incarnational presence might be. The greater goal of "reimaging" in an action research project is the behavioral change that comes from the new manner of perceiving. That greater goal could not be evaluated in the allotted time and with the chosen methodology.

This project was designed to do (embody), in both the live presentation and this written dissertation, what it reveals. The position, direction, and embodied purpose have attempted to be modeled in the flow of the theology of dialogue in chapter two. The flow began with Scripture and the revelation of the *Logos,* then moved to and through Church history as God's human messengers were heard, then moved to the culture and listened to hear back into the Church from the culture and take the world's need for healing back to the hearing Christ.

The live presentation of the theology of dialogue also attempted an embodiment of message as being a "sharing of self" with all the associated risks. As the presenter, I was conscious throughout that my own presence and manner of presenting had great power to

communicate a message beyond the words alone. I was not only communicating a theology: I was communicating me. Message and messenger each impacted the other and formed the dialogue with the respondents. The personal nature also encompassed the transformative aspect of dialogue as I understood from the research that if the message had not changed me, it would not change others. The personal change I experienced in the process of this project was included in the presentation at Calvary and is included in the fourth implication below. Briefly stated, the process of study and discovery of the theology of dialogue changed me as the researcher and presenter. To represent it more colorfully, I entered the process with answers looking for questions, and now I stand in greater awe of the reality that answers pale in comparison to The Answer present and inviting me to dialogue with God in him. The discoveries and implications that follow are valuable for informing Christian faith and practice but do not exhaust all that may be learned from the research.

Seven Discoveries from the Findings

1. Listening says something. The presentation had the greatest effect on perceptions of Christ as the mediator through which God not only is heard but also hears. One discovery from that finding was the value of listening in dialogue, and particularly the value the participants placed upon God hearing them through Christ.
2. To touch is to be touched. The second greatest effect was related to understanding that in Christ God not only touches but is touched.[1] The discovery that the presentation was

[1] This finding could use further exploration of the degree to which the respondents' understanding of a "touchable" God were related to his physicality in Christ versus his emotional connection and relatability through Christ's human empathy.

effective in shaping an image of a touchable God was encouraging for a project aimed at incarnational outcomes. The literature study also found that touch in dialogue connects its most relational, intimate, and simultaneous aspects.

3. More conversation is needed. Current engagement in intentional dialogue was the least impacted by the presentation. As no time had passed between the presentation and immediate post survey, the presentation could not have impacted how often people were already engaging dialogue. As such, the answers to the question of frequency represented a candid evaluation of current lack of regular dialogue with people of differing views. The majority of respondents could not "strongly agree" that they were having such missional conversations.
4. Questions communicate care. The study of Jesus's conversations and the Harvard University research on negotiation both highlighted the role of questions and listening in dialogue. Questions demonstrate the personal, relational value placed upon the one being heard by the one listening. Listening communicates relationally beyond the information being shared.
5. There is no loving the lost without a cost. As interactive and relational dialogue was studied, it became clear that dialogue changes participants on both sides of a risky exchange, as Habermas was quoted in saying they "open themselves up for one another."[2] The cost of loving dialogue was first incurred with God's self-sacrifice of Christ for the sake of the lost (1 John 3:16, Rom 8:32, Isa 53:5).

[2] Habermas, "A Philosophy of Dialogue," 11.

6. Empathy "stands with" the other. The value of empathy was found in both religious and non-religious studies of dialogue and, taken with the positional and directional aspects of the theology of dialogue (existing between and simultaneously on both sides), offered illumination of God's empathy in "standing with" sinners in Christ (Phil 2:7, 2 Cor 5:21, John 1:14, Heb 4:15).
7. The presentation was effective. A presentation of discoveries must include the finding that the presentation of the theology of dialogue not only changed perceptions but also improved confidence to engage more regularly and more missionally in dialogue. That confidence increase was not in the top three impacts, but as sixth out of thirteen and still a huge magnitude of effect at 2.26, it was a significant finding that represented the potential effectiveness of the presentation to alter future behavior and accomplish the action research project's greater goal of incarnational discipleship and engagement. From a research question perspective, this discovery could be the greatest as it is derived from the answer to the research question and validates the potential of the theology of dialogue presentation.

Seven Implications for Faith and Practice

1. If God's hearing through Christ was the most impactful understanding of the presentation on the local church, then one may infer that the Church's listening to the world in its dialogue could be the greatest opportunity to impact the world in, through, and for Christ. This discovery has implications for teaching on and creating opportunities to practice

missional listening.[3] Much more Christian literature appears to be focused upon hearing God than hearing the world.

2. If God touching and being touched in Christ was the second most impactful understanding of the presentation, then one may infer that the Church is to not only reach out to the culture but also to humbly and vulnerably welcome being touched by the culture. Such a physical gospel "for your sakes" might invite communion with the world through touching the common wounds.
3. If missional dialogue is not regularly taking place, then there is opportunity both for more cultural engagement and for the presentation of the theology of dialogue to be further taught and practiced in both Calvary Church and other USAmerican churches and possibly in international cultural contexts as well.
4. If questions communicate care, Christ may be better heard through the Church's questions of culture than her answers.[4] The value of listening and the power of questions impacted me as the presenter and became part of the closing of the presentation. The project was initiated with a presupposition that the world needed to hear the answers found in Christ through the Church. What became apparent was that rather than the world not listening, I was not listening. Christian dialogue, if it is truly the two-directional, empathetic, embodied conversation for the other's sake, begins with loving presence and

[3] The Doubter's Club project and work of Preston Ulmer is a great example of a contemporary effort to improve the world's dialogue through listening from a biblical motivation. Although the approach is not overtly missional, it is intrinsically missional aimed at leading the culture to healthier dialogue. See Preston T. Ulmer, *The Doubters' Club: Good-Faith Conversations with Skeptics, Atheists, and the Spiritually Wounded* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2021).

[4] Another key conclusion of the theology of dialogue study was that more than "having answers," the Church is God's answer – his chosen message and messenger in time and space post the earthly life of Jesus.

listening. Before it gives an answer, it asks questions and invites the other to a true and relational dialogue. The implications of the power of questions to communicate care have the potential to reimage the Church's approach to making disciples and to being salt and light (Matt 28:19-20, Matt 5:13-14).

5. If dialogue is relational and interactive in a manner that affects all participants, then the Church will be changed by dialogue with the culture. The risk of wounding is real. The reality of wounding was Christ's experience and also the mediation of restored communion with God. An implication for the Church is that to fellowship with Christ through the power of new life may also require fellowship in his suffering as that life is laid down again and a cross taken up to engage in missional dialogue (Phil 3:10, Luke 9:23). There is also opportunity for the Church to benefit from interaction, but in either gain or loss, there is impact from missional dialogue with the culture.[5]
6. If empathy is "standing with," there is an implication that a dialogical Church may find its common humanity with the world as great a value for the *missio Dei* as its separation in an intentionally in-not-of position. Intercession is possible in this position. If there is a way to lead a world to God that is not first entered, it is not the way God chose to lead the world through Christ.[6]

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[5] A spiritual principle unaddressed by this study is the gain that comes from loss. In other words, in Christ anything lost for his sake is only a gain of something more valuable than whatever was lost. Jas 1:2-4, Matt 16:25, and Matt 19:29 are among the passages addressing loss and gain for Christ.

[6] There is already much study of what it means that God became human, but more can be done regarding the dialogical aspect of Christ's truly incarnational "standing with" sinful man to intercede and mediate relation with God. In the biblical study of the woman at the well, the beginning of the conversation was the common need for water which led the woman to Living Water. This is one example Christ followers might explore to advance incarnational discipleship.

7. If the presentation of a theology of dialogue was effective, and under the assumption that the goal of the presentation was beneficial, then it must be made available to more people of Calvary and, by implication, it may benefit other churches, Christian schools, and other Christian organizations, groups, and platforms. The work, if effective, compels further development and further implementation for the Body of Christ.

Expansion of this final implication for faith and practice may see further development as educational discipleship opportunities are created for Calvary Church as well as Christian schools, colleges, and other churches with the goal of motivating behavioral change in the way the body of Christ engages the culture. Making this theology of dialogue available in popular language publications and development of curricula to guide presentation and practice of missional dialogue for Christian churches and educational institutions is among the future goals. Put simply, the research and findings of this project offer opportunity for the Church to see Christ differently in order to be Christ differently in the culture. A Church seeing and being the image of Christ differently is reimaged for incarnational discipleship enabling purposeful and redemptive (missional) engagement with culture. In addition to these practical ministry opportunities, many additional academic study opportunities are also available.

Opportunities for Further Study

It is sincerely hoped that this study will be expanded. A portion of the foundation necessary for development and implementation of practical interventions, both at Calvary Church and for the broader Church in other locations, has been provided but it is just a single step in the direction of reimaging the Church as the embodied Christ. Future interventions would see believers

intentionally engaging their community in healthy dialogue which leads society forward. What form might additional effective interventions take? Digital communications were presented earlier in this study as inflaming rather than improving human division. In Paul Barnwell's experience, technology and social media help form a mode of communication "that doesn't truly engage students in extended critical thinking or conversation."[7] If these modes do not currently appear to be effective tools for the thinking and dialogue necessary to lead to health, additional study could explore more effective modes, or ways to make these modes healthier.

There are many opportunities for further theological study that would add to the related knowledge base. The chosen methodology had benefits and limitations. The quantitative post-survey alone did not give the depth of insight that future longitudinal or qualitative studies might offer. Additionally, the 5-point scale of the survey offered benefits but was also limited as the respondents could not give reasons for answers or expound on their understanding. A more open-ended approach would allow for insightful elaboration.

Given the theology of dialogue developed in this research project, it is possible to connect an understanding that occupying and identifying with both sides and filling and flowing through the space between is an omnipresent and/or unifying presence only possible for *I Am*, the revelation of identity and ultimate relation. In the fullness of meaning of that understanding, Christ is most fully realized as God-in-flesh and the *I Am* he was crucified for claiming to be. Although it is much deeper than this project explored, a simple version of the next logical step and question was the focus of this project: What is the Body of *I Am* in the culture if not a Body

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[7] Paul Barnwell, "My Students Don't Know How to Have a Conversation," *The Atlantic*, April 22, 2014, https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/04/my-students-dont-know-how-to-have-a-conversation/360993/.

that is-as-being-in? Further study is also compelled for understanding the *I Am* as bending time to omnipresence by being "everywhen" through eternal immanence and the Word as Divine Dialogical Mediator and bending space to omnipresence by being "everywhere," since he is simultaneously with God, with man, and also occupying the "space" between. These concepts are valuable for a truly embodied dialogue of humanity with God in Christ.

Multiple theological issues were introduced in this project as connected to a theology of dialogue and each of these compel additional study. Immutability,[8] ascension, perichoresis as dialogue (or dialogue as perichoresis), and the Church's union with God in Christ are among the theological studies potentially expanding a theology of dialogue or to be expanded by a theology of dialogue.

Regarding antagonistic cultural dialogue, additional research could verify whether polarization and degeneration are truly increased or whether there is an increase in sensitivity toward and awareness of those conditions. Additional study might also address the cultural forces leading to those conditions. A history of Christian engagement in the cultural issues of various eras would be a valuable study. Studies of specific historical interactions in particular regions or nations would also benefit particular cultures. The biblical study and conversations of Jesus in this project would benefit from a more systematic and comprehensive approach. As noted in the introduction, there is also opportunity to further examine specific issues of cultural dialogue such as race, economics, identity, and welfare in the current USAmerican culture to find theological underpinnings and improve the health of those conversations and outcomes. A

[8] By suggesting that dialogue impacts all participants, the question of immutability must be explored to support or challenge that suggestion. A possibility exists that changing versus unchanging is a problem of human comprehension and not a dichotomy in God. The question of what God hears is a question of immutability more than it is a question of omniscience.

study identifying which issues are more emotionally charged and predisposed to impasse can allow them to be specifically addressed biblically and theologically. Biblical study of the role of the Spirit in dialogue is necessary as no one comes to God absent invitation according to John 6:44. The properties of Christian dialogue with the culture, especially respect for the "other" (I/thou relations) invite further study.

This study was limited in its ability to address the pneumatological aspects of incarnational dialogue. For Pentecostal theology, the Spirit's work in dialogue across cultures and languages is more essential in understanding "tongues" than some of the tangential concepts that have been derived from that first missional outpouring. As mentioned in this study, Peter's Acts 2 message, which recalled Joel's prophecy, identified the "all nations" scope of the Spirit's work. That the Spirit's scope of outpouring includes linguistic and dialogical aspects is significant. In addition to pneumatological aspects, both the Christological aspects of dialogue and dialogical aspects of Christology can be further developed.

For the Calvary Church community, study may be conducted to determine what may be preventing greater engagement in healthy theological dialogues within their context. The theology of dialogue presented compels more comprehensive study. The findings of this study also compel additional interventions, whether teachings, programs, or initiatives aimed at increasing incarnational discipleship through missional dialogue with the culture. The concept of the body of Christ as divine dialogue, both through Christ in flesh and through the Church in flesh, compels further study and consideration for the people and ministries of Calvary Church.

These suggestions by no means exhaust the potential of future studies. Future related studies are prayerfully, hopefully, and expectantly anticipated.

Conclusion

A theology of dialogue can bridge orthodoxy and orthopraxy and reimage the Church for incarnational discipleship and engagement with the culture. Christian literature and Scripture address the need of broken human relations and interactions and offer Christ as the solution through the Church. The study demonstrated that Christian cultural dialogue is nothing less than participation in the *missio Dei* in which the Christ-filled Church is God's embodied dialogue with humanity as both message and messenger. The Spirit-filled Church by nature must dialogue with the culture to lead it to life and blessing. The Christian community/Church, and Calvary Church in particular, has a God-given, Christ-announced, Spirit-empowered role to preserve, illuminate, and move society forward from destructive and divisive dialogue to health and beauty, from chaos to order, from conflict to *shalom*, and from death to life to the glory of God.

Conclusions from the study suggest that the Church must be a listening presence in the culture if it is to bring healing. More can be heard from questions than from answers. Questions communicate care and invite to relationship. As missional presence, the manner of presence and manner of dialogue matter. Might the world respond to a humbled Church as the Church responds to a humbled Christ? As incarnational presence, the Church dialogues with the world through touching and being touched. Might a wounded world find greater healing from an invitation to touch the wounds of the Church than from an articulation of answers? Christ is both message and messenger of the Father. He is the dialogue. The discovery that I was not listening enough to the world came through the research that revealed questions and listening as sharing oneself with and valuing (loving) the other. Sharing self is the essence of embodied dialogue as God shared himself in Christ. As the Body of Christ, might the Church be the answer God has given rather than being people with answers to give? Christ, the Church, and Christ in the

Church are in dialogue, and they are dialogue – the ongoing, two-directional, expressing and listening dialogue of God with the world he first spoke and continually, lovingly speaks.

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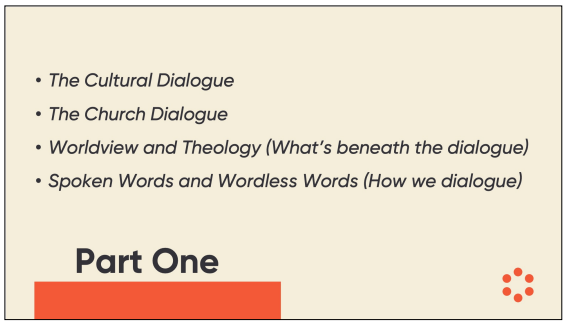
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

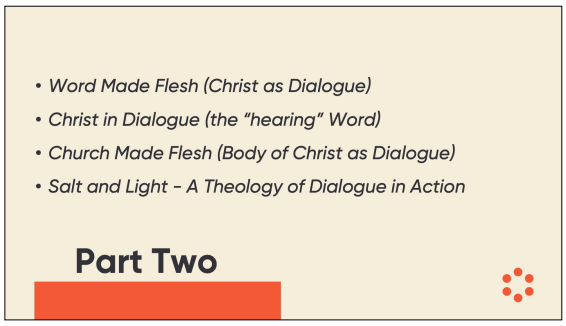
PRESENTATION SLIDES AND PROMPTS

Intro: Part one - cultural dialogue and the role of the Church - what's underneath and within those conversations
Part two - God's dialogue with humanity - what it means to see Jesus AS God's living dialogue - not just one who has conversations, but who IS God's communication.
Finally, presentation will cover what it means for the Church to be the Body of Christ and engaged in the missio Dei in our time and culture.

Dialogue versus monologue
The first thing God does in the Bible is speak into chaos creating order, purpose, beauty, and life. That same creating Word became flesh, visible, touchable, according to John 1 - this same Word was the light and of mankind who imparted his Spirit into his disciples and commissioned his Church to continue being his life-giving light to the world.
George Eldon Ladd: "the gospel must not only offer a personal salvation in the future life…it must also transform all of the relationships of life here and now."
Could Christ-followers be intended to speak into cultural chaos, characterised by destructive dialogue, and light the path to order, purpose, beauty, meaning, and life? If so, how?


• The Cultural Dialogue
• The Church Dialogue
• Worldview and Theology (What's beneath the dialogue)
• Spoken Words and Wordless Words (How we dialogue)
Part One

overview.
Question: Is modern American cultural dialogue healthy? Social media conversations healthy? Political conversations?


• Word Made Flesh (Christ as Dialogue)
• Christ in Dialogue (the "hearing" Word)
• Church Made Flesh (Body of Christ as Dialogue)
• Salt and Light - A Theology of Dialogue in Action
Part Two

Dialogue is "through-word" not a "to-word"

Time magazine 2021
• There is no advanced industrial democracy in the world more politically divided, or politically dysfunctional, than the United States today
Master Class

Societies always have challenges. There are always issues with potential to polarize culture. When the conversations devolve from dialogue to diatribe and solutions are framed in victory or defeat/right or wrong, collaboration breaks down and progress stalls.
2020 election cycle…expanded the vitriol and personal attacks of the 2016 cycle. Labels generalize and ostracize those with opposing views. Examples: homophobe, fascist, woke, extremist

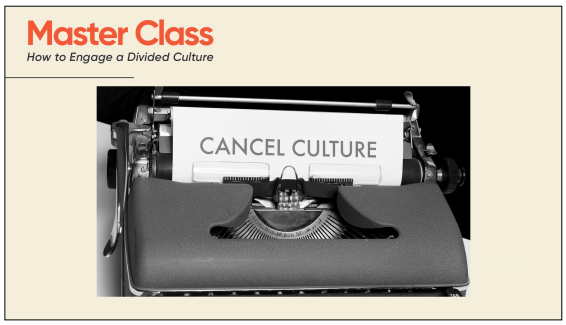
Psychology Today 2018
• Sitting down for Thanksgiving dinner with family has never been more uncomfortable…what has happened to America?
Master Class

Forbes quote: “a growing number of journalists saying they plan to call it quits from Twitter as toxicity rises to a level even they can no longer stand amid everything from hurtful taunts about their children to outright threats of violence.” (“Is Social Media Becoming Too Toxic” July 19, 2018 Kalev Leetaru) 2 months after the Forbes article, Psych Today…

National association of scholars
• Anger today is "more flamboyant, more self-righteous, and more theatrical than anger at other times in our history."
Master Class

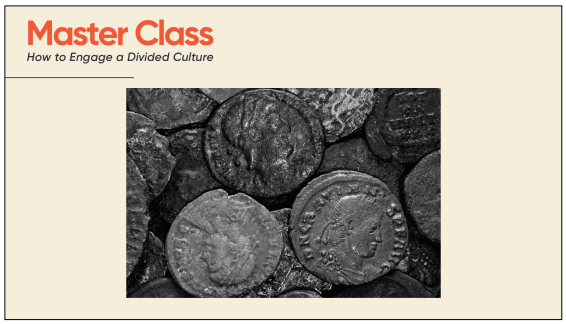
Jeff Myers quotes 2013 research finding angry Tweets the most retweeted. (Understanding Culture, 149)

Lukianoff and Haidt "extremists have proliferated on the far right and the far left, provoking one another to even deeper levels of hatred." (Coddling American Mind, 5)



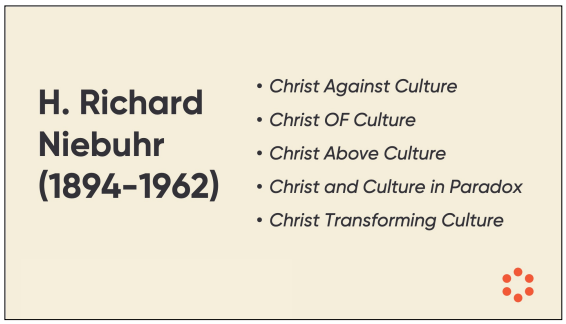
Callout Culture shames, amplifies fear, demonises opposing views…a "common-enemy politic…combined with micro aggression theory." (Lukianoff and Haidt, 77)
Don't like the message, shut out the person - don't like the person, shut out the message

What role does the Christian/Church play when dialogue needs redeeming and culture needs healing?



Christ and Culture: Should all Christians see issues the same way? Support the same party? Participate in this “unprecedented hostility”? Participate in partisan politics or even discuss issues that may lead to disagreement?
Questions of cultural and political engagement by God’s people existed before Christ - a contemporary issue was presented to him regarding taxes to Rome in Mark 12 and Matt 22
What was the Messiah the people were expecting? The scene pits “separatist” crowd supporting Jesus against the religious rulers in cahoots with Rome.
Mark 12:14-17

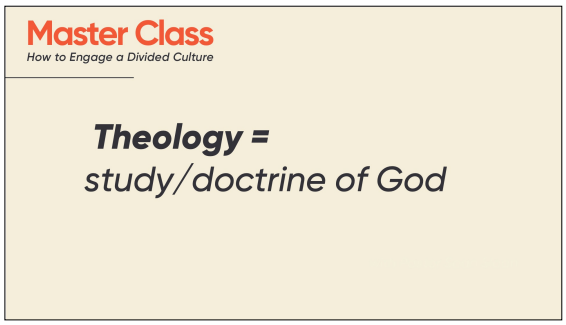
Jesus’s approach should solidify the Christian response, but from the first century to the Church Fathers, to WW2 to today, there is no simple context or single answer.
Issue is rooted in understanding how a “called out” “set apart” people are to be in the world and not of the world.

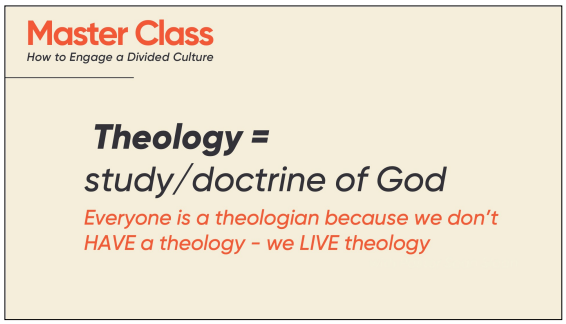

H. Richard Niebuhr (1894–1962)
• Christ Against Culture
• Christ OF Culture
• Christ Above Culture
• Christ and Culture in Paradox
• Christ Transforming Culture

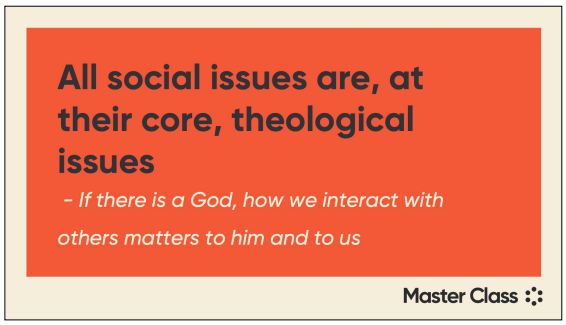
Amy Black - Five Views on the Church and Politics…describe categories of interaction/separation
From synthesis to separatists there is a spectrum of political engagement but no Christian view completely rejects civil duty.

David Closson “we should never equate the church’s mission with the platform of a political party.”
American politics is partisan politics, but issues concerning Christians are divided up between the two (care of poor, orphan, widow, immigrant, parental authority, justice for oppressed, personal responsibility, value of human life, even taxes).
Approaches are also divided…Give a fish or teach to fish? Jesus did both!
Whichever side of the aisle, there is a Christian way to view and interact with others - NOT with demonization, cancellation, or violence, but honor, truth, nobility, humility, pursuit of peace, and unity in Christ (Phil 4:8, Rom 12:18, Eph 4:5-13)
Christ-followers do not bite and devour but love…even enemies…walk in the Spirit and bear his fruit. Jesus appealed to image
Do we see God’s image in others? Bear his image in our conversations?
Thomas Johnson, “God’s Word provides solutions to the entire range of human needs” (“Christ and Culture” Evangelical Review 35 no. 1 2011)

Culture survey of 2021 - Many of Calvary are not regularly engaging in respectful, exploratory dialogue with people holding differing views. 57 of the 115 respondents said they primarily only dialogue with those already agreeing with them.
Echo chamber effect.

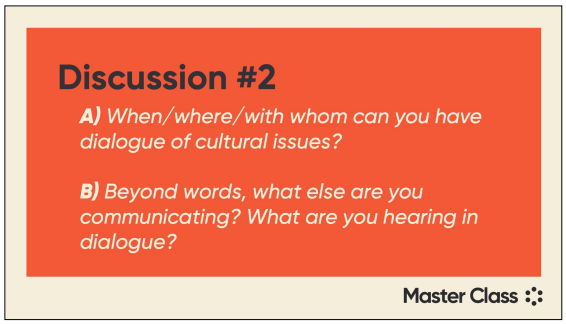



Master Class
How to Engage a Divided Culture
Theology =
study/doctrine of God
Everyone is a theologian because we don't
HAVE a theology - we LIVE theology

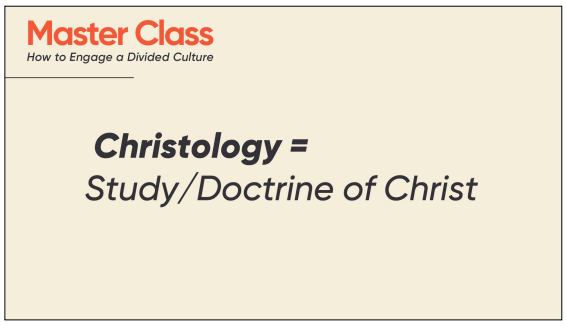

All social issues are, at their core, theological issues
- If there is a God, how we interact with others matters to him and to us
Master Class

All social issues are theological at their core because, if there is a God, how we treat one another matters to him and to us. He has a say in how we interact with his children.
If there is a God and we are his children, both mother and child in the womb matter, both officer and inmate matter, both citizen and foreigner matter, both the human and the planet matter. We don't get to choose. He sets our identity - not our race, gender, status, or desires.

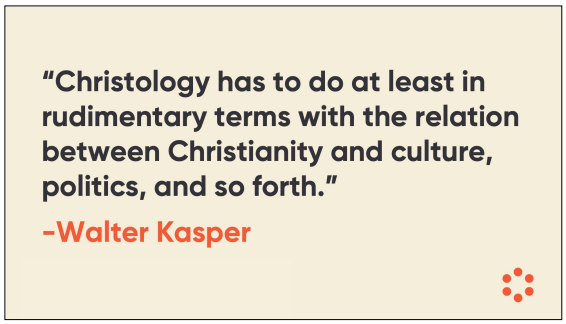
Power of Words/More than words (touch and presence) Prov. 18:21 life and death in power of the tongue. James' epistle. Words create worlds. Andy Crouch quote on creation.
Because there is no dialogue absent listening, wordless elements exist in dialogue even without words (Myers, Understanding Culture, 136)
God sometimes communicates in "sending someone to give us a hug" (Mouw, Uncommon Decency, 183).
Anonymous axion often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi "when necessary use words"
Bonhoeffer, Christ is "haveable, graspable in the Word within the Church." (Act and Being, 91)
Touch refines revelation and response more clearly…To touch is to be touched. Mouw "I too am willing to be changed by what happens between us." In being known by God humans know God - (Bonhoeffer, Act and Being, 134)


Discussion #2
A) When/where/with whom can you have dialogue of cultural issues?
B) Beyond words, what else are you communicating? What are you hearing in dialogue?
Master Class

Graham Ward describing Mary and Thomas' interactions with Jesus
Dialogue is two-directional. Such interaction affects both persons in the dialogue.
Mother Theresa - in the middle of her culture communicating through her touch and presence with those society rejected - canceled.
She made Christ present and known to lead others to health and life.



Word made flesh (through-word) God's solution to our division. Crossed the greatest divide, sin -separation.
Goal - think biblically/theologically about cultural issues
The "world" seeks to answer theological questions without God - how do we present him in conversations where he is unknown or rejected? Begin with how God dealt with our separation from him.


"Christology has to do at least in rudimentary terms with the relation between Christianity and culture, politics, and so forth."
-Walter Kasper

Walter Kasper "Christology has to do at least in rudimentary terms with the relation between Christianity and culture, politics, and so forth." (Kasper, Jesus the Christ, 20)
Graham Ward "to foster the economy whereby God is made known to us. To do Christology is to inscribe Christ into the times and cultures we inhabit." (Christ and Culture, 2)
First record of destructive words Gen 3:1-5. The rest of Scripture is the aftermath of that first destructive word.

John 1:9-14

Master Class
How to Engage a Divided Culture

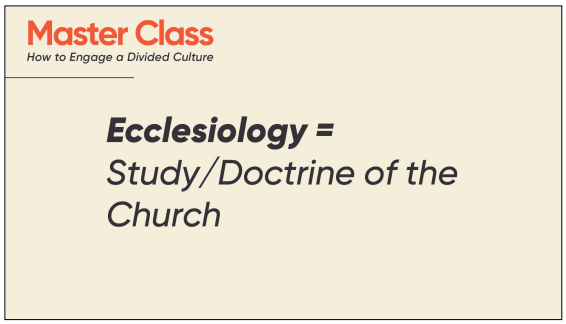
John 17: *Unity of Christ and His church*

The world created by words has been devastated by words - into this corrupted world, Christ comes as Logos - Word in human flesh.
It is the same world in which Christ intentionally leaves his Church John 17:15-23.

Master Class
How to Engage a Divided Culture

Questions Jesus Asked: Samaritan woman John 4:4-42

Luke 10 Lawyer testing Jesus “and you shall love” passages
Seeing the “other” as more like oneself than either is like Christ places humans together (Christian and non-Christian) in relation to God. Places Christian identity with culture as relating to common aspects of fallen humanity. Identifies with the model of Christ expressed in Phil 2:6-8
Prioritizing God’s word and showing his love and mercy to others places the Christian identity with Christ as related to the “other” - as in Christ we are a mediator communicating (dialogue) God’s love in word and action…

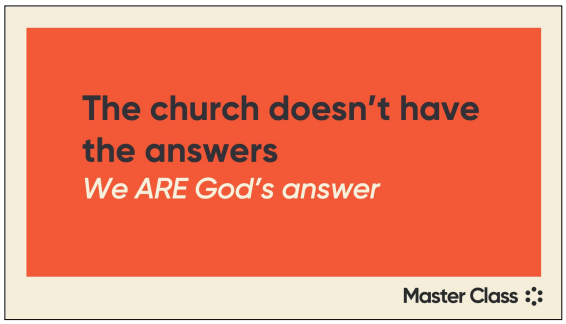


A dialogical Christology leads to a dialogical ecclesiology: the Body of Christ is today what Christ in a body was then.
Christ is present in and facilitator of the dialogue. **Ward** emphasises Christ as the physical and spiritual mediator between God and humanity.

Bonhoeffer emphasises the Church, joined with Christ, as the present mediator between God and humanity. No Church absent Christ - no Christ in the world absent the Church. **Niebuhr** - humans do not come to know Christ "apart from a company of witnesses who surround him, point to him…direct our attention to his relations with the Father and the Spirit" (Christ and Culture, 245)
Christ cannot be excised from ecclesiology or a theology of dialogue. Ekklesia in Acts 2:47 (Karkainen quote)
Acts 2 possible key to dialogue with culture -Spirit transcends language. Could a Spirit-filled believer be on mission to cross divides in the language of the culture?

No sacrifice of distinction in God's unity either for Christ in the Trinity, or the Christian in unity with God as Spirit-filled Body of Christ - we are one with God and called to his mission. Once Christ (the dialogue of God with humanity) is responded to in faith (loving God), then the believer unites with God in dialogue with the rest of humanity (loving neighbour). The mission of God is to restore fellowship. The mission of the church in dialogue with the culture is to live out of the new nature and being, a love-compelled and Spirit-empowered living and speaking "for your sakes" Phil 1:21-26.

Christian dialogue has the potential to benefit culture in real, practical ways for even the most challenging social issues. Redemption affects natural/ temporal life and relations as well as the spiritual and eternal.
Leading the culture to truth and love leads it to life and peace by leading it to God in Christ.
The Church not only CAN engage, she MUST by her very nature as the Body of Christ
No remaining in love and withholding truth. Those in Christ share Christ.
Love and truth are lacking in the issues dividing and damaging humanity - world needs to SEE a better way forward. (Tim Keller manner of communicating care through listening - never compromising truth but leading people to life not being right about an issue)



Jesus is Divine Logos - He IS the dialogue of God. We are literally Christ embodied and touchable in flesh - a reading of Act 1:8 could say the Spirit of Christ empowers the dialogue of God with culture through the Church. Division and conflict in relationships, evidenced by damaging, destructive words, are restored through healing words - words of death addressed by the Word of life. The Word is Christ. The Word is in and through Christ. That Word is in the Church as Salt and light Matt 5, John 17. Spirit compelled people enter the conversations affecting human conditions in their time and space for kingdom purpose! Action steps…Come and SEE begins with GO and BE. Before anyone sees Christ in us, they see us.
Where I missed it…

Final question: How will YOU engage a divided culture?

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL

SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DATE:	June 14, 2023
TO:	Sean Sloan, Mark Langner
FROM:	SEU IRB
PROTOCOL TITLE:	Survey of Calvary Dialogue Master Class Participant's Experience
FUNDING SOURCE:	NONE
PROTOCOL NUMBER:	23 MT 13
APPROVAL PERIOD:	Approval Date: June 14, 2023 Expiration Date: June 13, 2024

Dear Investigator(s),

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled, Survey of Calvary Dialogue Master Class Participant's Experience. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol pending the following changes:

- The informed consent must clearly identify SEU as the sponsoring institution. Please also add researchers' contact information as well as contact information for the IRB (irb@seu.edu)

Any changes require approval before they can be implemented as part of your study. If your study requires any changes, the proposed modifications will need to be submitted in the form of an amendment request to the IRB to include the following:

Description of proposed revisions;
If applicable, any new or revised materials;
If applicable, updated letters of approval from cooperating institutions

If there are any adverse events and/or any unanticipated problems during your study, you must notify the IRB within 24 hours of the event or problem.

At present time, there is no need for further action on your part with the IRB.

This approval is issued under Southeastern University's Federal Wide Assurance 00006943 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under the IRB's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Rustin Lloyd
Chair, Institutional Review Board
irb@seu.edu

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT

PROJECT TITLE: Calvary Dialogue Master Class Anonymous Survey

INVESTIGATORS: Primary (Overseer) Dr. Mark Langner, Co-Investigator (Study Analyst) Rev. Sean Sloan

PROCEDURES: This survey consists of a series of multiple-choice questions to understand the participants view of cultural theological issues. Participation should take no more than five minutes.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION: There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION: Facilitate understanding of effectiveness of the presentation which will inform services provided by Calvary Church.

CONFIDENTIALITY: This is an anonymous survey facilitated through an approved third-party service. Identifying information will not be collected and survey results will be aggregated. No results will be sent to participants

COMPENSATION: Benefits of voluntary participation are from the possible improvements to ministry services of the church. No tangible compensation or benefits will be provided.

CONTACTS: You may contact the researchers at malangner@seu.edu. Southeastern University is the sponsoring institution. The Institutional Review Board may be reached at irb@seu.edu for any questions or concerns regarding this survey.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS: I understand that my participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time, without penalty.

CONSENT DOCUMENTATION: I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what I will be asked to do and of the benefits of my participation. I also understand the following statements:

I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my participation in this study.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

APPENDIX D

SURVEY OF CALVARY DIALOGUE MASTER CLASS PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE

1) I attend church:

___ Rarely or not at all

___ Special occasions

___ Quarterly basis

___ Monthly basis

___ Weekly basis

2) I have attended Calvary Church:

___ Never

___ 1 Year or Less

___ 2 to 5 Years

___ 6 to 10 Years

___ Over 10 Years

Survey

3) Issues dividing the culture have theological roots.

5 - Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Uncertain 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

4) Economic issues are impacted by how people view God.

5 - Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Uncertain 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

5) Gender and identity issues are impacted by how people view God.

5 - Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Uncertain 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

6) Race and justice issues are impacted by how people view God.

5 - Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Uncertain 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

7) Dialogue benefits even the most challenging cultural issues.

5 - Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Uncertain 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

8) Breakdown of dialogue with God prevents humans from flourishing.

5 - Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Uncertain 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

9) Christ is God's LOGOS, or restored dialogue (two-way conversation) with humanity.

5 - Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Uncertain 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

10) Through Christ, God not only is heard and seen, but sees and hears.

5 - Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Uncertain 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

11) God not only touches but is touched through dialogue.

5 - Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Uncertain 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

12) The Church is the Body of Christ, literally Christ embodied in the current culture.

5 - Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Uncertain 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

13) The Church does not “have” the answer, so much as she “is” God’s answer.

5 - Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Uncertain 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

14) I have open, respectful conversations on a regular basis with people who hold differing views of current cultural issues.

5 - Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Uncertain 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

15) After experiencing this presentation, I feel more confident to purposefully engage potentially divisive conversations.

5 - Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Uncertain 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL – INITIAL (UNPUBLISHED STUDY) SURVEY

SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DATE:	October 22nd, 2021
TO:	Alan Ehler, Sean Sloan
FROM:	SEU IRB
PROTOCOL TITLE:	Calvary Naperville Survey of Current Social Issue Engagement
FUNDING SOURCE:	NONE
PROTOCOL NUMBER:	2021 MT 16
APPROVAL PERIOD:	Approval Date: October 22nd, 2021, Expiration Date: October 21st, 2022

Dear Investigator(s),

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled, Calvary Naperville Survey of Current Social Issue Engagement The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol

Any changes require approval before they can be implemented as part of your study If your study requires any changes, the proposed modifications will need to be submitted in the form of an amendment request to the IRB to include the following:

- Description of proposed revisions;
- *If applicable,* any new or revised materials;
- *If applicable,* updated letters of approval from cooperating institutions

If there are any adverse events and/or any unanticipated problems during your study, you must notify the IRB within 24 hours of the event or problem

At present time, there is no need for further action on your part with the IRB This approval is issued under Southeastern University's Federal Wide Assurance 00006943 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) If you have any questions regarding your obligations under the IRB's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us

Sincerely,

Rustin Lloyd
Chair, Institutional Review Board
irb@seu edu